

\$12m contract to revamp acid plant

AMMAN (J.T.) — A \$12.6 million contract has been signed between the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) and a French consortium of Bouygues/Sofresid for revamping the sulfuric acid plant at the Aqaba fertilizer complex to increase its capacity from 3,600 to 4,500 tonnes per day. The project is part of the JPMC long term plan to enhance phosphate production and processing by promoting joint venture projects, and increasing capacity of the existing facilities, a press release said. The JPMC will be able to meet the requirements of Nippon Jordan Chemicals (NJK) joint venture project as well as potassium sulfate and other projects to be developed in participation and coordination between the JPMC and the Arab Potash Company. The project will be implemented within 16 months from the date of signature.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية، الراي.

Jordan, Japan to have air links

AMMAN (J.T.) — The civil aviation authorities of Jordan and Japan Tuesday signed an agreement of cooperation under which the national carrier, Royal Jordanian, and the Japanese Airlines (JAL) will operate two regular flights every week between Amman and Osaka, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported. The agreement was signed by Director General of the Civil Aviation Authority Ahmad Juwailah and his Japanese counterpart, who is leading a Japanese delegation now visiting Jordan. The two sides agreed to hold another round of talks during which they will initial a bilateral agreement on further details of the air transport accord between both countries, Petra said. Petra did not give the name of airport to which RJ would fly, but it is expected to be Kansai, a \$9 billion new airport under construction in Osaka Bay. Osaka is about three hours by train from Tokyo.

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Tough battle seen brewing over draft alcohol legislation

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff

AMMAN — Islamic Action Front (IAF) deputies, determined to press ahead with their drive for a complete ban on liquor, will seek to have a draft law on alcohol governed by the Islamic code, IAF sources said Monday.

But the 18-member bloc will not have clout to ensure the success of its bid in the 80-member legislature despite the support it is expecting from lawmakers, deputies said.

The draft legislation, similar to a 1984 law that regulates the use of alcohol in Jordan, was sent to Parliament on Tuesday by the government. The law will ban Muslims from producing, selling and importing alcohol in Jordan and define punishments for violators. But it leaves the door open for Christians to engage in the trade.

The draft law, which also bans the serving of alcohol at state functions, comes nearly two years after deputies asked the government to draft a new legislation that would introduce a complete ban on alcohol in the Kingdom.

Producing, selling and drinking alcohol is a complete taboo in Islam, which the Constitution defines as

the religion of the state.

"The draft law does not meet the requirements of Islam, but such a law was expected from the government," IAF Deputy Hamam Said said.

Dr. Said said the IAF would seek the support of other deputies in its push for amending the law to correspond with Islamic teachings. And "when it comes to issues clearly defined in religion, we believe that many deputies will be with us," he said.

Jordan National Front (JNF) spokesman Mohammad Thoubat agreed and said he would support a ban on alcohol because it was a clear Islamic requirement.

Other deputies disagreed. "The (IAF) deputies) will not succeed in their bid," leftist deputy Abdul Hafez Shakhaneh said.

Mr. Shakhaneh, member of the 22-member Progressive Democratic Coalition (PDC), said Jordan needed more legislation that promotes tourism. "Laws that (hurt) tourism should not be introduced," he said, pointing to the negative impact a ban on alcohol would have on the industry.

Observers expect the IAF to "use the power of religion" to embarrass deputies who would not support its

(Continued on page 5)

Regent tells U.S. congressmen of impact of Aqaba blockade

Prince briefs Near East Institute delegation

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, told a U.S. congressional delegation Tuesday that the inspection of Aqaba-bound vessels by the enforcers of the sanctions against Iraq was causing severe damage to the Jordanian economy.

The siege on the port and the harassment of shipping are continuing although Jordan is fully committed to and abiding by U.N. resolutions concerning the embargo on Iraq, Prince Hassan said at the meeting held at the Royal Court.

(Continued on page 5)



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Tuesday meets with a delegation representing the U.S. Congress (Petra photo)

Yeltsin foes take big lead



Vladimir Zhirinovskiy

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Extreme nationalists who want to revive the Russian empire took a massive lead Tuesday in parliamentary election results as President Boris Yeltsin's supporters appealed for help to defend democratic reforms.

With more than two-thirds of the election districts reporting Tuesday, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was leading with 24.5 per cent of the vote. The ultranationalists appeared to have an unseatable lead, government officials said.

The main pro-Yeltsin group, Russia's Choice, was trailing in second place with 13.9 per cent after Sunday's election. The

Communist Party had 11.6 per cent. The anti-Yeltsin Agrarian Party had 9.5 per cent and the Women of Russia bloc followed with 8.2 per cent.

Three other minor parties appeared likely to get at least five per cent of the vote, the required minimum to get seats in the Duma or lower house of parliament. There were no firm indications on how many seats each party would have.

Liberal Democratic Party leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy demanded major changes in Mr. Yeltsin's economic reform programme and said he would seek the resignation of key

(Continued on page 5)

Arafat hopes self-rule snags will be removed

LONDON (Agencies) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat Tuesday was optimistic about faltering Middle East peace talks, insisting, "where there's a will there's a way," and terming Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin "a great and courageous man."

Mr. Arafat began his first official visit to Britain by lunching with Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and ambassadors Raymond Seitz of the United States and Moshe Raviv of Israel.

Mr. Arafat said afterwards he planned further talks with Mr. Rabin in Cairo "to investigate all the obstacles which we hope we will be able to overcome."

Withdrawal of Israeli troops

from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho was due to have begun Monday and be completed by April 13, but violence and glitches in the Cairo talks caused delay.

Mr. Hurd hailed "the beginning of a new chapter and we in Britain are determined to play a helpful part in the new chapter as we played a prominent part in the old chapter."

"It has been an excellent day," said Mr. Hurd.

Mr. Arafat, who was to meet with Prime Minister John Major on Wednesday, downplayed the failure of his talks with Mr. Rabin in Cairo last weekend.

"There are some differ-

(Continued on page 5)

Israelis kill two more in Gaza

GAZA CITY, Occupied Gaza Strip (Agencies) — Israeli forces killed two Palestinians on Tuesday, and wounded 20 more in Gaza Strip clashes.

Two men from the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas opened fire from a car on a police patrol on the edge of Gaza City, lightly wounding a policeman, military officials said.

Osama Hamdi Hmeid, 25, was shot dead in the riposte while his accomplice and a

(Continued on page 5)

Scope of Israeli pullout could be as crucial as control over crossings

By Lamis K. Andoni
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

ALTHOUGH control over crossings has been cited as the major snag that has hampered a deal on Palestinian autonomy between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel, definition and the scope of an Israeli military withdrawal from the occupied territories could be most crucial to the future of the peace process.

PLO officials are already warning that the talks could

be suspended if Israel insists on "redeployment" of troops in the Gaza Strip, allowing it control over security and the port and consolidate the status of Israeli settlements as one unit.

"If Israel does not adhere to the second annex of the (Sept. 13) accord then talks will come to a halt," cautioned Saleh Ra'fat, a member of the Palestine Democratic Union (PDU) that supports the autonomy agreement.

The PLO understands the provisions in the accord to in-

volve an actual Israeli withdrawal and specific limited security control within the settlements themselves. But Israel has used these terms to argue for a redeployment of troops in an area extending from the Gaza port to the Mediterranean strip's boundaries with the West Bank and Israel.

According to the Israeli interpretation, maintaining control of the security of the settlements means connecting the settlements in one

(Continued on page 5)

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U.S. hopes Israel-PLO gaps could be bridged

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — The State Department has brushed aside the delay in starting Palestinian self-rule in Israeli-held territories, asserting that the two sides can overcome the current impasse.

"Our assessment is that it can be done," spokesman Mike McCurry said, reaffirming that the United States has no intention of mediating a solution.

Monday was the deadline by which Israel was to have begun military withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who was in the region last week encouraging the parties to narrow their differences, spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin Sunday night about the situation.

Mr. McCurry did not disclose details but said Mr. Christopher found during his trip a seriousness of purpose on both sides.

Mr. Rabin agreed to meet with Chairman Yasser Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in 10 days to try to resolve differences over three key issues, including the size of the Jericho autonomy zone.

During this period, Mr. McCurry said, the United States will encourage the parties to focus on practical steps

needed to start the withdrawal. The spokesman said the United States has urged the parties in the peace process "to move forward to focus on the practical steps that will be necessary to get the implementation underway."

Mr. McCurry noted that the Israel-PLO negotiations for self-rule in Gaza and Jericho are part of a "difficult" process that will take time.

"I don't want to underestimate the importance or the difficulty of reaching agreement on those issues, but I think our assessment based on our contacts in the last day or so is that it can be done," he emphasised.

He added as well that both parties "understand the seriousness" with which we regard "the proposition of making progress on implementation as fast as possible."

The United States will focus on what the international community can do, especially with economic assistance, to make sure that the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO is "viable," the spokesman stressed.

"We've known all along that the issues involved in this discussion between the two parties were very difficult ones," he stressed. "They involve transitional arrangements; and they involve fundamental issues of how do you carry

forward the declaration of principles as negotiated."

He said that Secretary of State Christopher in his just concluded trip to the region found a "very serious sense of purpose" on both sides. "The secretary in the last 24 hours has restated and redoubled his efforts to urge the parties to continue to make every effort to resolve their differences."

Mr. McCurry said that Mr. Rabin late Sunday following the prime minister's meeting with Mr. Arafat. "We've had other contacts with the parties, and we certainly intend over this next 10-day period to stay in touch with them." He added that "we will also be in contact with the Egyptian government since President Mubarak was the sponsor" of the Dec. 12 discussions.

Mr. Christopher made clear during his recent trip that "we're not entering into this process as an intermediary or as someone who will be at the table to help them hammer out the details of this agreement," Mr. McCurry emphasised.

The declaration of principles was negotiated in face-to-face discussions between the two parties, "as it rightfully should be," he continued. "It was successful. And we think that implementation itself can be successful as the parties meet face to face."

Habibi meets Assad, Nasrallah

DAMASCUS (AP) — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad met Tuesday with Iranian Vice-President Hassan Habibi for talks believed to have focused on the Arab-Israeli peace process and the fate of six Israeli soldiers missing in Lebanon.

Mr. Habibi also met Tuesday with the Syrian counterpart, Abdul Halim Khaddam, and discussed "the situation in the Middle East," the Syrian Arab News Agency reported without giving details of either meeting.

Damascus-based Western diplomats said Mr. Assad was expected to seek Tehran's cooperation to determine the fate of the Israeli servicemen.

Iran's Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported from Damascus that Mr. Habibi and Iran's foreign minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, held talks Tuesday with Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, head of the

Hizbollah. The Iranian-backed group is reported to hold at least three of the six Israeli servicemen missing in Lebanon. Two of them are believed to be dead.

The diplomats in Damascus, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Mr. Assad hopes to wrap up the issue of the Israeli before he meets with President Bill Clinton in Geneva in mid-January to pave the way for the resumption of deadlocked Syrian-Israeli peace talks.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher announced in Damascus last week that he had secured a pledge from Assad to help find the missing Israelis. He said the development was a "humanitarian gesture" to help push forward the peace process.

IRNA, monitored in Cyprus, said Mr. Habibi and Sheikh Nasrallah "reviewed

the current developments in the occupied Palestinian and the anti-Zionist activities of the Islamic resistance movements."

The agency said Mr. Habibi "renewed Iran's support for the struggle of the Lebanese people and the resistance movement against the Zionist enemy."

In his meeting with Mr. Kaddam, he called for "a full-fledged campaign till liberation of all the occupied territories."

Mr. Habibi arrived in Damascus Monday with a high-level entourage, for what the Iranian media said was an annual meeting of a joint Iranian-Syrian committee.

Iran has opposed the Middle East peace talks, launched under the sponsorship of the United States and Russia in 1991. But it also is reluctant to strain its relations with Syria, its only ally in the region.

'Illusions' led to collapse of Somalia talks — Meles

ADDIS ABABA (Agencies) — The breakdown of Somali peace talks here last weekend was due to the illusions of the various parties that they could seize power in Mogadishu for themselves, Ethiopian President Meles Zenawi said.

The two main sides, warlord Mohammed Farah Aideded and the self-styled "interim president" Ali Mahdi Mohammed, "entertain some illusions (and) sooner or later there will be disillusion" which will enable a solution to be found, Mr. Meles told a press conference.

Despite the breakdown, the meeting of the Somali factions had partly succeeded since one of the goals of the informal talks had been to restart dialogue among them, Mr. Meles said. "In that sense it was successful."

He dismissed a charge by the Ali Mahdi camp that his government supported General Aideded.

Though, firmly opposed to massacres that had taken place in southern Mogadishu, "we do not believe that any faction merits special support... They are equally bad or equally good."

Gen. Aideded was sought

earlier this year by United Nations forces in Somalia in connection with the killing of U.N. peacekeepers, but other faction leaders were also believed to be involved in the violence that has reduced the Horn of Africa country to starvation levels in the past few years.

Mr. Ali Mahdi returned to Mogadishu on Monday, while Gen. Aideded remained in Addis Ababa Tuesday.

Mr. Meles dismissed accusations from the 12 factions allied under Mr. Ali Mahdi who claimed he was biased towards Gen. Aideded. Mr. Meles said the impression resulted from his efforts to halt the carnage in the southern half of Mogadishu, which Gen. Aideded controls.

He said he would have done the same for Mr. Ali Mahdi had it been his forces at battle with U.N. troops.

However, he did issue an opinion often expressed by Gen. Aideded that the U.N. operation in Somalia should steer clear of the reconciliation process and handle only humanitarian assistance.

Gen. Aideded on Tuesday addressed about 100 supporters, some carrying placards

critical of the U.N. operation in Somalia, by the swimming pool at the Ghion Hotel where he has been staying in this East African capital.

An Aideded spokesman in Mogadishu on Monday erroneously claimed the warlord had returned to Somalia's capital aboard a U.S. aircraft and had been escorted to his headquarters by U.S. forces.

His travel to Ethiopia Dec. 2 aboard a U.S. military plane drew heavy criticism from American troops in Mogadishu. Gen. Aideded waged war against U.N. and U.S. troops from June through October when scores of soldiers were killed, including 24 Americans.

Earlier Monday, U.S. army spokesman Steve Rausch said there were no plans to fly Aideded home aboard a U.S. aircraft.

Aideded in Ethiopia said his travel plans would remain secret out of security concerns.

Clan fighting after the fall of dictator Mohammed Siad Barre in January 1991 exacerbated a drought that resulted in a brutal famine. An estimated 350,000 people died from starvation and warfare.

Syria voices mistrust at self-rule delay

CAIRO (R) — A Syrian envoy on Tuesday voiced mistrust at Israel's delay in implementing the accord to bring limited self-rule to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

"Syria wants the Palestinian brothers of get their rights and restore their (occupied) lands as quickly as possible. We do not see in the Israeli position any indication they (Israelis) are faithful to their commit-

ment," Mouawafiq Al Ailaf, head of the Syrian negotiating team to Washington, told reporters.

Mr. Ailaf, speaking after meeting Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdul Meguid, said they both discussed the continuation of the Arab economic boycott of Israel.

"The secretary-general affirmed to me the position of the Arab countries — that the

boycott will continue as long as the reason that led to its imposition prevail."

He reiterated Damascus' stand of "no peace without a full Israeli withdrawal" from lands occupied in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Syria and Lebanon agreed last week to resume peace talks with Israel in Washington in January following a peace mission by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

Lebanese woman issues last-minute plea to ensure justice in Kuwait case

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A Lebanese family whose father and son were shot dead and a daughter was raped and shot in the head in post-war Kuwait in March 1991 is calling on all governments and international organisations to ensure that a trial in Kuwait of the case comes to a fair and just verdict.

The last session of the case, where a suspect is on the dock, is scheduled to be held at a Kuwait court today (Wednesday) with no indication of when the verdict will be issued, said a statement received here from Naimat Farhat, the 35-year-old victim of the rape and attempted murder.

Miss Farhat, whose father Ismail and brother Osama were shot dead in the assault in the days immediately after the Iraqi occupation army was ousted from Kuwait, believes that the trial is a sham since key witnesses have not been called and some testimonies have been tampered with.

In a message to the minister of interior of Lebanon, Miss Farhat said: "I believe that the government of Lebanon and its embassy in Kuwait should be committed to following up our case... and finding solutions with the government of Kuwait, which has abandoned its responsi-

bility towards me and my mother, who has lost her husband and son."

"I am crippled since the incident and am supported by my brothers. It is clear that the Kuwaiti judiciary has no intention to put on trial all those involved in the killings..." she said, reaffirming the family's charges that senior officials of the Ministry of Interior of Kuwait were involved in the affair.

The appeal, copies of which were sent to the media, the U.S. Congress and the Kuwaiti parliament among others, called on the Lebanese government to seek an "equitable settlement of the family."

The family has charged deliberate suppression of evidence and twisting of facts as well as character assassination in the case.

Naim Farhat, brother of the rape victim, is also charging that the Kuwaiti court trying the case has not indicated any willingness to call prosecution witnesses who he says could testify to the actual happenings at the Farhat residence in Kuwait City on March 2, 1991.

Mr. Farhat, a U.S. citizen resident in San Jose, California, argues that the killing of his father and brother as well as the rape and attempted murder of his sister Naimat were ordered by senior Kuwaiti officials.

Jaber Al Omeiri, a former

"interrogator" with the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior, is the prime suspect in the case. He was detained in mid-1993 after an intense campaign by the Farhats on the international level.

The defence argument is that Mr. Omeiri was seriously injured in a car accident several days before the incidents described by Naimat Farhat took place and, as such, he was not in a physical condition to have carried out the attack as charged.

Miss Farhat travelled to Kuwait in August and positively identified Mr. Omeiri as the man who came to her house, made her tie up her father and brother, raped her, shot her in the head and then killed the two hogged men. Miss Farhat, left to bleed to death, was rescued by neighbours. She underwent surgery, but one side of her body is paralysed and she needs help to move around.

The family has enlisted the support of American and international human rights organisations and lawyers. It says that witnesses' testimonies were changed and others who wanted to testify were discouraged or intimidated.

"The whole trial is a farce," Mr. Farhat told the Jordan Times over the phone. "Kuwait only wants to satisfy the international outcry the case has raised and then close the book."

Thatcher's office knew of arms sale to Iraq, Clark says

LONDON (Agencies) — Former Defence Minister Alan Clark has told a government enquiry into arms sales to Iraq that the office of former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher knew about a change in the weapons embargo.

Last week Mrs. Thatcher told an inquiry into her government's 1988 decision to relax the arms embargo against Iraq: "It may have been mentioned to one of my secretaries."

But she added: "I have no recollection if it was."

Mr. Clark Monday told the inquiry headed by Lord Justice Scott that her private office had been informed and that his colleague, William Waldegrave, then Foreign Office minister, should have told parliament of these "significant" changes.

Mr. Clark also said the Foreign Office urged him not to announce the change in export guidelines to Iraq, arguing that it could pose "presentational difficulties" after reports that forces loyal to Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein had used gas against Kurdish villages.

Mr. Waldegrave, now minister for the citizens charter, told the inquiry that he had not

announced a relaxation of the export guidelines to Iraq because there had been no change in policy, only a change in how it was interpreted.

The inquiry was set up to investigate claims of collusion by ministers and civil servants in the export of defence equipment prior to the Gulf war, which breached official guidelines and export control legislation.

Mr. Clark's evidence last year led to the collapse of the trial of three executives from the Coventry-based Matrix Churchill machine tool firm accused of evading export controls.

The Scott inquiry was set up by Premier John Major following the trial under pressure from the opposition Labour Party.

Mr. Clark told the inquiry that he regarded government restrictions on arms sales to Iraq as "tiresome" and deliberately imprecise. "I would at ways regard them to some extent as a kind of packaging to wrap round different decisions," said Mr. Clark.

Testimony by Mr. Clark, a political maverick and long-time Thatcher favourite, is re-

garded as crucial to the seven-month inquiry into the bending of the government's own restrictions.

Civil servants and several government ministers have conceded, often reluctantly, at the inquiry that in effect the guidelines were quietly loosened when the war between Iraq and Iran ended in 1988. Britain had curbed sales to both countries in 1985.

Mr. Clark, who was defence procurement minister until April 1992, acknowledged being "economical... with the actualities" — giving his own twist to the expression "economical with the truth."

A wealthy old Etonian whose political career faltered after Mrs. Thatcher was ousted, Mr. Clark was relaxed Monday — in contrast to her sometimes tense manner before the inquiry.

He joked, often took charge of the questioning, and gently mocked Foreign Office fears that news of sales would look bad.

"I don't think they (the Foreign Office) would allow themselves to admit there was an inherent latitude (in the guidelines)," said Mr. Clark.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Palestinians earn less now than before intifada

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Earnings per inhabitant in the occupied territories increased five per cent in 1992, but they are still below the levels of six years ago, according to official figures published Tuesday. Average earnings per Palestinian reached \$2,300 in the West Bank and \$1,200 in the Gaza Strip, or about five per cent more than in 1991. But the figures were still 10 per cent beneath average earnings the year before the intifada began in December 1987, the Israeli government's central bureau of statistics reported. Money earned by Palestinians in the territories, in Israel and remittances from abroad, which fell dramatically after the 1991 Gulf war, are included in the figures.

29 face charges of espionage in Sudan

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Twenty-nine persons including a former armed forces commander in chief will go on trial before a special court Dec. 20 accused of plotting to topple the government of Omar Hassan Al Bashir, it was reported here Monday. The 29, of whom 17 will be tried in absentia, include Lt-Gen. Fathi Ahmad Ali who served as commander-in-chief of the Sudanese armed forces. Brigadier Ali Hadi Bushra who was head of the Sudanese security force and Brig. Abdul Rahman Saeed who was the chief of staff for operations, the government daily Al Engaz Al Watani reported. The accused face trial for plotting against the state, undermining the independence and unity of the country, dealing with a foreign hostile country, espionage, and passing over to a foreign state military and security information and classified documents, the paper said. The accused face penalties of death and life imprisonment for the offence of espionage and plotting against the state. The court will be headed by Judge Zubair Mohammad Khaleel assisted by two other civilian magistrates.

Syrian hanged for killing girlfriend

DAMASCUS (AP) — A 23-year-old Syrian man, convicted of murdering his girlfriend six months ago, was hanged in a public square at dawn Tuesday. Mohammed Amer Issa had been having an affair with the victim, Rima Al Eid, 26, for three years, but refused to marry her. Instead, he got betrothed to another woman, the government newspaper Tishrin reported. Fearful that Ms. Eid would expose their relationship to his fiancée, Issa decided to kill her, the newspaper said. Issa, who worked in his father's paint shop in Damascus, lured Ms. Eid on June 3 to an apartment he owns in the resort of Madaya, 50 kilometres northwest of the capital. There, he shot her dead with a pistol and hid her body in a cave. A month later, a friend of Ms. Eid told police about the couple's love affair and provided a photograph of them together. He was arrested and during interrogation confessed to his crime, Tishrin said.

Beirut resumes talks with workers

BEIRUT (R) — The Lebanese government resumed talks with the country's labour unions in a last minute attempt to convince them call off a general strike threatened on Wednesday. Labour Minister Abdullah Al Amin held talks Monday night with leaders of CGTL labour confederation on increasing fringe benefits to workers. Mr. Amin said positive ideas were discussed but CGTL leader Elias Abu Rizk said the meeting did not achieve much. Both men said they were to meet again on Tuesday in a "last chance" meeting. Monday's meeting was the first in the 12 days since the confederation announced plans for a general strike on Dec. 15 if the government failed to meet their demands.

Europarlament urged to clear Syria aid

STRASSBOURG, France (R) — The European Commission urged the European Parliament on Monday to clear more than \$300 million in aid to Syria, saying its human rights record was improving. The parliament has blocked a financial protocol worth 304 million European Currency Units twice before because of concern about human rights, especially restrictions on Jews leaving the country. EC Commissioner Yannis Paleokrassas told the parliament that Syria had promised to make 800 additional exit visas available for Jews before the end of December. It had also released a number of political prisoners, he said. He said dialogue with all Middle East countries was essential to strengthen the community's influence in the region and contribute to the peace process. "Adopting this protocol will give us extra ammunition as regards exerting pressure on the government (on exit visas)," he said. He said the commission was prepared to draft an annual report on Syria's human rights record. The parliament is scheduled to vote on the question on Wednesday.

Fifty Kurds start hunger strike in London

LONDON (R) — Fifty Kurds started a hunger strike at a community centre in London Monday demanding that Turkey ends what they called "its campaign of genocide and depopulation in Kurdistan." The 50, on an "unlimited" hunger strike, expect hundreds more people to join them at the Kurdish and Turkish community centre in north London, a statement faxed to Reuters said. It said the action was also in protest against bans on the Kurdish people's right to organise in European countries, particularly Germany and France. "Kurdish people were forced to come to this country because they supported the national liberation struggle being led by the PKK (rebel group)," the statement said. "We will continue to support the struggle wherever we are." The hunger strikers also want an end to arms sales by European nations to Turkey and demand the British government send a delegation to Kurdistan to assess the situation there.

Two sentenced to death in Morocco

RABAT (AP) — Two Moroccan cousins have been sentenced to death for the 1992 murders of a Belgian man and his Moroccan companion, authorities said Monday. Abbas and Hassan Lagouri were convicted of strangling Michel de Potter and Mina Bannani at De Potter's home in Marrakech on April 21, 1992. According to the police, the two cousins stayed through the night at de Potter's home, getting drunk on liquor from his bar.

JORDAN TELEVISION

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PROGRAMME TWO

17:30 Only Sports N.B.A.
18:00 News in French
19:15 Le Journal de L'Histoire
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 Too Close for Comfort
21:10 Ocean World
22:00 News in English
22:30 Film "Till Murder Do Us Part"

PRAYER TIMES

05:00 Fair
06:23 (Sunrise) Doha
11:30 Dhuhr
14:15 Asr
16:38 Maghrib
18:00 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swetfield, Tel. 810741
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 634590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 627401
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasants Church Tel. 623666
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 625411

Anglican Church Tel. 630851, Tel. 628543

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 625226
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684193
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Moderate weather conditions will gradually prevail with temperatures remaining below average, and winds will be northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, it will be partly cloudy with northerly winds and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
12/12
Aqaba 10/22
Deserts 3/14
Jordan Valley 9/20

Yesterday's high temperatures: Am-

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDER

man 9, Aqaba 20, Humidity readings: Amman 98 per cent, Aqaba 50 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mukhlis Halasa 819220
Dr. Jamil Maraqa 776149
Dr. Khaled Maadi 743500
Dr. Jamal Ibrahim 847351
First pharmacy 641912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 626782
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yaoum pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637860
Nairoukh pharmacy 626782
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Muzen Sharaf 248056
Al Quds pharmacy (-)

ZARQA:
Dr. Mufid Damra 985522
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 643402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints Amman Municipality 787111
Complaints Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 016230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdullah Telephone Repairs 981101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussien Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn. 642281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malthas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 664171/4
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musharraf Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/7
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 77701/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 77511/26
Army, Shkarka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674133
ZARQA:
Zarqa Gov. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al-Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)755555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)727275
Ibn Al-Nafies Hospital (02)347100
AQABA:

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (05)52005, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
08:00 Aqaba (RJ)
08:55 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:00 Jeddah (RJ)
09:15 Sania (Y)
10:30 New Delhi (RJ)
11:00 Berlin, London (RJ)
11:10 Istanbul (RJ)
11:30 Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
12:00 London (RJ)
19:30 Colombo (RJ)
19:45 Cairo (RJ)
20:20 Riyadh (RJ)
20:30 Aden (RJ)
21:30 Calcutta, Bangkok (RJ)
22:45 Sania (Y)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

05:55 Beirut, Paris (AF)
06:25 Rome (AZ)
08:15 Beirut (ME)
08:25 Cairo (MIE)
08:55 Sania (Y)
12:50 Jeddah (SU)
13:30 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PI)
15:45

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

05:55 Beirut, Paris (AF)
06:25 Rome (AZ)
08:15 Beirut (ME)
08:25 Cairo (MIE)
08:55 Sania (Y)
12:50 Jeddah (SU)
13:30 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PI)
15:45

HUAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Al Quds Open University staff stage sit-in to demand salaries

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Nearly 80 employees of Al Quds Open University Tuesday held a two-hour sit-in at the university's offices in Amman to protest a six-month delay in the payment of their salaries.

The protesters said in a note they sent to Palestine President Yasser Arafat that they were also deeply concerned for their families, and they demanded to learn about their fate and that of the university.

Representatives of the protesters said that the university, which was established in 1978, was recently sold to Ahmad

Tamimi an Arab-American, and the university staff feared that the new owner would convert the university into a private university.

Al Quds Open University was established in order to provide correspondent education to students in the occupied Arab territories, and its work has been carried out with the help of several offices operating inside the Israeli-held lands.

The workers in these offices have also received no pay for the past six months, and they are worried about their future said the representatives.

"In fact we sent an earlier

memorandum to President Arafat during his last visit to Amman but he has failed to examine our grievances and to respond to our legitimate demands, hence the sit-in today," said Khaled Hasanein, head of a committee representing the protesters.

Ahmad Abu Sheikh, the acting president of the university, has not received his salary for the past six months either, but he declined comment on the situation.

According to university sources, the salary delay affects nearly 10,000 workers affiliated to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) offices operating in Jordan.

Arab, Canadian specialists review economic dimensions of Mideast peace

IRBID (Petra) — Canada's ambassador to Jordan, Andrew Robinson, Tuesday underlined the importance of the ongoing peace process in the Middle East, expressing hope that it would lead to security and stability for all its peoples.

Canada fully supports the process and calls for aid to the various parties so that an opportune climate for the establishment of peace and stability can be created, said Mr. Robinson at the opening session of a three-day meeting entitled "Middle East Peace Process Economy Conference."

Organised by Yarmouk University in cooperation with the Canada Fund for Dialogue and Development (CFDD), the meetings are attended by specialists in Middle Eastern affairs from Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon and Egypt in addition to Canada.

Mr. Robinson voiced appreciation of Yarmouk University which hosted the conference and CFDD for its financial support of the meeting.

Encouragement of dialogue, discussion and effective cooperation among interested parties in the region would provide opportunities for the establishment of professional relationships, business links, and better management of the shared natural resources such as water. These discussions are

also essential to raise the awareness of the economics of peace in the Middle East among the populations of the region," said Ambassador Robinson.

He added that Canada recognises that the problems of the Arab-Israeli conflict are many, and that they "cannot be settled by governments alone."

The ambassador said that the Canada Fund for Dialogue and Development was established to encourage dialogue at all levels.

He said this dialogue fund seeks to promote exchange of ideas about development issues surrounding peace and cooperation between Arab countries in the region and between Arabs and Israelis.

Also addressing the opening session was Yarmouk University President Ali Mahafza who said that the conference coincides with a crucial stage in the life of the Arab nation and a turn of events that would influence the nation's present and future generations.

Dr. Mahafza said the Middle East region was exposed to a series of serious developments over the past five years and as a result, "the world has fallen under the mercy of a single superpower."

He added that the past five years also saw the Arab orient embroiled in political crises, that further deepened inter-Arab differences and brought

about foreign domination.

It is in the midst of this situation that the Madrid conference was opened in order to find a durable settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the Arab countries exerting all their efforts to attain peace and to protect Arab rights, lands and interests, said Dr. Mahafza.

But, he said, the Arab countries have so far exerted little efforts among themselves to coordinate their stands vis-à-vis the bilateral and multilateral phases of Arab-Israeli negotiations, adding that it is because of this that Yarmouk University's committee in charge of studies on refugees decided to organise this meeting in order to shed more light on the situation and discuss projects that are being debated at the negotiating table.

According to Dr. Mahafza, the participants will also study means of lessening the extent of economic damages to the Arab World that might ensue as a result of a settlement.

In the three-day meetings, the delegates will review working papers related to the economic dimensions of the peace process and discuss ways to protect Arab economic interests and try to draft a formula that would ensure continued consultations among Arab researchers and experts to help the Arab states involved in the peace process.

Experts study 'feeding' underground aquifers as means to enhance country's water supply

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A three-day regional conference, entitled "Horizons of Artificial Recharge of Groundwater," went into its second day Tuesday at the University of Jordan, with the participants from Arab and foreign countries reviewing 13 working papers dealing with water issues in the Arab World.

Hazem El Naser and Raja Jadoun of the Ministry of Water and Irrigation and the Water Authority of Jordan presented a case study in which they focused on the feeding of underground aquifers in the Jordan Valley region.

Interest in the re-use of treated waste water in most developing countries has increased lately because of the large amounts of waste water being produced as a result of population growth and continued development, the paper added.

The three-day meeting was opened Monday by Minister of Water and Irrigation Hisham Al Khatib who stressed that Jordan was facing water short-

ages because of the growing demand on supplies.

While the ministry is striving to upgrade and improve the management of water supplies and reduce losses in the underground networks, said Dr. Khatib, it also continues to search for new resources that can contribute to solving the water shortages in the Kingdom.

One of the methods currently being investigated is the modern technology of feeding the aquifers, and several related experiments are being conducted, he said.

Specialists Tuesday address second day of meeting devoted to exploring the horizons of artificial re-charge of groundwater, held at the University of Jordan



Specialists Tuesday address second day of meeting devoted to exploring the horizons of artificial re-charge of groundwater, held at the University of Jordan

Officials say no quick fixes to shortfalls in TCC services

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The crisis that Jordan's telecommunications sector is facing today is a legacy of the blow that the Kingdom suffered in the late 1980s when accumulated debts undermined its economy, and there are no quick fixes to meeting the huge demand for services, senior officials said Tuesday.

"The Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) is working very hard to address the problems, but nothing can be done overnight," said Afraim Jamil, a senior official of the TCC, a government agency.

Mr. Jamil, a telecommunications engineer, said the corporation was implementing some "crash programmes" to address the immediate needs for telephone lines by the industrial and commercial sector, but it would not be before the end of 1997 that a "bulk of the demand — 80 to 85 per cent — of the national demands are satisfied."

The TCC official declined to

provide any definite deadline for fulfilling pending applications for telephone lines in any region, including Amman, where the demand is the highest, or of the scope of the "crash programmes."

Other officials have said they expected a good part of the pending applications in the business areas of Amman to be satisfactorily met before the end of 1994.

According to the officials, the government has refocused attention on the telecommunications sector and approved the project after freezing all new ventures in 1988, when the economic crisis struck.

The worst part of the freeze was that it came at a time when demand was already high and the concerned authorities were supposed to have speeded up work on upgrading existing networks as well as installing new projects so that the gap between demand and supply would not stretch too wide.

But, as it happened, the freeze put a total end to all

projects, ongoing as well as planned, and, as a result, Jordan is facing the shortfalls in services.

"Regardless of the reasons and who was to be blamed, the fact remains that Jordan did not implement any new telecommunications project in seven years," said Mr. Jamil. "Such a delay is not something that any country could afford if it were to meet demands in a satisfactory manner."

Mr. Jamil said that, in numeric terms, about 10 per cent of the total population will have telephone service by the time the ongoing national project is completed in 1997, compared with the seven per cent today.

He did not provide specific figures on the number of lines that Jordan will have in the year 1997, but a rough calculation based on a present population of four million and an annual growth of four per cent would put the number at nearly 500,000.

Mr. Jamil said: "Both the public as well as the TCC are

suffering today; the public because they do not have lines, and the corporation because its present equipment is overburdened."

He explained that any new national telecommunications project takes not less than four years, since it involves laying cables and setting up exchanges and networks in addition to the period that the manufacturer takes to produce the equipment.

"No one could just go to market and buy equipment of this type," said Mr. Jamil. "The equipment has to be purpose-built to suit our specifications and this cannot be done in a matter of weeks or months."

The outcome of two years of contacts the TCC had with the private sector to address the shortfalls with private capital was an amendment to the TCC Law to allow the Jordanian private sector to invest in "complementary services" — such as paging systems and cellular phones — but not in the "traditional, national sys-

tem."

The TCC has already granted a paging concession under a licensing arrangement and has floated a tender for cellular phones. The tendering process is expected to be completed by March, with the cellular system expected to go operational not before 1995.

Mr. Jamil emphasised that cellular phones were not the answer to the rising demand for telephone lines.

"It is only a complementary service and has no reflection on the national plan that the TCC is implementing to address the basic need of consumers in Jordan," he said.

The TCC's efforts, launched in 1991, to have private sector involvement in an "install, operate and share" scheme did not yield fruit.

Under the scheme, the TCC would have allowed the private sector to build exchanges and networks with private capital and commercially operate the systems for fixed periods and then hand over the systems to the TCC.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Regent awards Riad Al Mufleh

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Tuesday conferred Al Kawkab Medal of the First Order on Riad Al Mufleh in appreciation of his services and contributions to supporting national institutions. Mr. Mufleh had established the Jordan Cement Factories Company in 1952 and made generous donations towards building Muta University Mosque and Salt Mosque. He also set up a JD 300,000 fund to help educate poor students from the Balqa area at Jordanian universities. The award ceremony was attended by the Upper House of Parliament Speaker Ahmad Al Lawzi and His Majesty King Hussein's advisor Yanal Hikmat.

Cabinet grants exemptions to 11 industries

AMMAN (Petra) — The Cabinet Tuesday approved recommendations made by the Investment Encouragement Committee to provide facilities and grant exemptions to 11 certified industries with a total capital of \$15 million.

Minister opens Korean Cultural Centre

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Culture Amin Mahmoud Tuesday opened the Korean Cultural Centre in Amman. In an opening speech, Dr. Mahmoud stressed the importance of bilateral relations and means of enhancing them. The director of the new centre praised His Majesty King Hussein's policy and his interest in further enhancing cultural exchanges between both countries.

Near East policy institute team visits UNRWA facilities

AMMAN (J.T.) — A seven-member team from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP) Tuesday visited the Bagaa refugee camp and met several officials from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and the Foreign Ministry Department of Palestinian Affairs.

The team, headed by Director Robert Satloff includes Paul Wolfowitz, Michael Mandelbaum, William Marshall, David Aikman, Paul Rosenfeld and Paul Giger.

WINEP is a Washington-based think tank which focuses its work on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The visit Tuesday included an UNRWA school, built with a donation from the Chinese gov-

ernment.

UNRWA officials outlined to the WINEP team the agency's services to the refugees which are provided in cooperation with the Jordanian government.

The team arrived in Jordan Monday from the occupied West Bank and are expected to leave Wednesday morning for Damascus on the next leg of their tour of the region.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Art exhibition by Jordanian artists Khaled Hijazi, Mohammad Al Ameri, and Adnan Al Sharif at Phoenix Gallery for Art and Culture (Tel. 695291).
- ★ Art exhibition by artist Hani Al Hourani entitled "Impressions from Wadi Al Wahah" at Baidana Art Gallery.
- ★ Art exhibition by Iraqi artist Salam Jamil at Alia Art Gallery.
- ★ Art exhibition by artist Samia Zaron at the Open Studio "Al Marsam Al Maftuh," Jabal Amman, 2nd Circle (9:00-13:00 and 15:00-17:00 all days except Fridays).
- ★ Photographic exhibition by artist Basheir Al-Hajeh at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Two exhibitions of paintings by Edelbert De La Portilla and Pitr Pawlaczok at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of prints and drawings of Fakhreussa Zeid at Darat Al Funn of the Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation in Jabal Lawelbeh. Also showing the permanent exhibition (Saturday-Thursday 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.).
- ★ Plastic art exhibition by a number of Iraqi artists at La Casa Art Gallery (between the

5th and 6th Circles).

- ★ Exhibition of paintings by artist Khaled Khreis at the French Cultural Centre.
- ★ Art exhibition by artist Farhadi Abdel Hafiez at the Balkis Art Gallery in Al Fuheis (10:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.) (Tel. 720902).

FILMS

- ★ Film entitled "Saturday Night and Sunday Morning" at the British Council at 7:00 p.m. (90 minutes).
- ★ Circassian film entitled "The Twilight of Hopes" at Philadelphia Cinema at 8:30 p.m.

LECTURES

- ★ Lecture entitled "Byzantine and Umayyad Palestine: The Strands of Continuity" by Dr. Irfan Kavar Shahid, professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Georgetown University, at the American Center of Oriental Studies (ACOR) at 7:00 p.m.

MUSICAL CONCERT

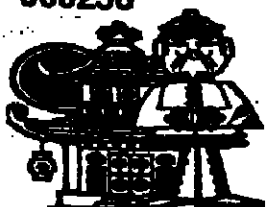
- ★ Musical concert at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

SPORTS ROUND-UP

- ★ A one-hour programme featuring a condensation of the most popular games of the week with play-by-play announcement at the American Center at 5:00 p.m.

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Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1974

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Fewer but better

JORDAN CAN certainly pride itself with a modern and comprehensive network of roads and city streets. In the last few decades roads have reached almost every village no matter how remote. Yet there is so much that needs to be done to preserve these roads, especially against damage from rainwater.

Roads are very expensive to build, and still more expensive to maintain. We have seen very clearly that roads built in haste and at nominal initial cost deteriorate rapidly and require constant repair and recoating almost annually. Also roads built without slopes that drain rainwater tend to wear rapidly due to the accumulation of water. The fact is also that roads and city streets which are built without adjoining pavements tend to break at the edges. Many roads and streets are not provided with rainwater drainage systems, and water running along those roads and streets continues to erode them. All these are of course basic faults in the building of our roads that make their maintenance a very expensive affair.

Roads, whether made of cement or asphalt, are an invention of the developed world that first introduced the car. They are built based on fixed standards that developed over years of use and experimentation. It should not be difficult to import from those developing countries, as we import the cars themselves, the standards for building the roads. Building roads at low cost and below standard is a sheer waste of money. It is much better to build fewer but sturdy kilometres, rather than thousands of weak kilometres.

Another factor that helps in destroying our roads is excess weights. Many of the trucks that use the roads in Jordan carry more weights than allowed by the standard of the road itself. We do have in our law books regulations against this irresponsible use of the roads, but the authorities entrusted in applying the law are not enforcing it.

The roads in modern day countries are like the veins in the body of a human being. They ensure the vitality of the people and increase their mobility. Therefore, they should be kept in good shape for people's safety and comfort.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

IT seems that growing differences between the PLO and the Rabin government are causing tension on both sides, and indeed obstructing the peace process at least on the Israeli-Palestinian track. Sawi Al Shaab daily said Tuesday. The underlying cause for all of this seems to be Rabin's persistence on maintaining control over security and border crossings into Jordan and Egypt through the Gaza Strip and Jericho areas, noted the paper. Rabin, who was quoted as saying that the Oslo deal is not so sacred that it could not be violated, has already defaulted over the Israeli forces' withdrawal from the two areas in implementation of the Sept. 13 accord. Rabin and Arafat have both admitted failure to reach agreement on the implementation of the deal at their Cairo meeting, and have deferred taking further steps until after 10 days when they scheduled another meeting to discuss the situation, added the daily. But, the paper noted, the current escalation of violence in the occupied Arab lands and the hostile stand of the Israeli government towards the Palestinians do not augur well for a speedy settlement on the implementation of the Oslo deal. The paper said it would be most advisable and wise for President Arafat to explain the real situation to the European leaders and the world at large during his European tour so that the Israeli actions could be exposed and the world community would realise that it is Israel which is obstructing peace.

Tareq Masarweh a columnist in Al Ra'i Arabic daily Tuesday expressed absolute dismay over the Arab writers participation in the UNESCO-sponsored Granada cultural dialogue which grouped Arab as well as Israeli intellectuals and writers. It is unbelievable to see Arab writers attending such meeting with the Israelis at a time when Israeli bullets continue to kill innocent Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank and Israeli shells are destroying Arab villages in Lebanon, said the writer. How could Arab writers open a dialogue with the Israelis over culture when the cultural centres of Palestine are exposed to the atrocities of the Israeli forces and settlers, the writer asked. He said that perhaps by organising the dialogue in Europe, the Europeans wanted to show their regret over their mistreatment of the Jews, but they ought to realise that in Antiochia the Jews were respected by their Arab rulers who granted them total freedom, said the writer.

Yemen's crisis threatens the country's unity

By Eric Watkins
and
Patrick Makin

YEMEN is currently passing through its worst political crisis since unification just over three years ago. With Vice President Ali Salim Al Beedh refusing to leave Aden since the end of August, Yemen is experiencing worsening economic and political strains which threaten both the country's tentative steps towards democracy as well as its very unity. Hailed just six months ago as a potential harbinger of political progress throughout the Arab World, Yemen is now beginning to look decidedly retrograde.

Problems began just after Yemen's 27 April parliamentary election. Since no party took a majority of the 301 seats in parliament, a coalition government was clearly in the offing. With 177 seats between them, President Ali Abdullah Salih's General Peoples' Congress (GPC) and Beedh's Yemen Socialist Party (YSP) looked set to continue their joint rule of the country for a further five years. But with 62 seats, the fundamentalist Islah Party began to demand a greater share in the government and, indeed, threatened to boycott the entire proceedings if their demands were not met. To accommodate them, the GPC and YSP apparently agreed to the election of Islah's

joint leader, Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hussein Al Ahmar, as speaker of parliament, and to the inclusion of six Islah members in the 29-member cabinet. But the GPC-Islah alliance has since grown much stronger than Mr. Beedh and the YSP anticipated, and the growing concern among members of the YSP is that the alliance aims at marginalising them from the government altogether.

Mr. Beedh has given a variety of reasons for his departure from Sanaa. He began by citing his opposition to changes in the constitution put forward by the GPC-Islah alliance to consolidate their grip on power. He followed with an 18-point list of demands to be met before he consider returning to Sanaa and taking up his place in the new government. But President Salih and the GPC implicitly rejected the vice-president's position by issuing a 19-point set of their own demands. And, to make sure that the political horizon was properly clouded over, Islah introduced a set of its own demands, as did a coalition of opposition parties. As a result, the lists of demands and counter-demands have obfuscated the central political issues involved and allowed the country's chronic economic problems to worsen perceptibly.

Economic problems
Yemen's economy was far-

ing badly enough without the political crisis. Oil production is up with the coming on stream of 120,000 barrels per day from Canadian Occidental's new fields in late September. But as the purported mainstay of Yemen's economic future, oil production has so far not reached the demands of the economy or the expectations of the people. Sun Oil recently pulled out of Yemen after an unsuccessful drilling programme and Shell has drilled four exploratory wells only to find them all dry. At just over 300,000 bpd, Yemen's production pales into insignificance next to Saudi Arabia's 8 mbpd and even the U.K.'s 2 mbpd. Indeed, Yemen's closest match in terms of crude oil production per day is Gabon, OPEC's smallest producer at 300,000 bpd.

Yemen's economic situation has not been helped by government overstatements of the country's oil potential creating false optimism in the populace. People increasingly want to see tangible rewards from their country's oil production but they have so far not had much opportunity. Instead of swelling the economy, much of the oil revenue has served only to replace aid and remittances lost when Saudi Arabia expelled some 800,000 Yemeni workers during the Gulf war. And there are continued widespread suspicions of high-level corruption have siphoned off much of the country's new oil

wealth, particularly by the president and his party.

An annual inflation rate for the past three years of nearly 100 per cent is the main concern for most of the population, but especially the 36 per cent now estimated as unemployed. To control the economic situation, General Salih has pressured merchants to keep prices down and has sought to keep price information under wraps. But a recurrent theme in newspaper cartoons is the continually rising price of eggs and the security of investing in chickens.

The political crisis has obviously made the economic situation worse. On 21 October, Beedh stated he would never return to Sanaa and the following day the rial began to fall rapidly in unofficial trading. Yemenis tend to see falls in the exchange rate as synonymous with rises in prices; so, when the rial was rumoured to be falling by the hour many shopkeepers simply refused to sell their goods. By 26 October its value against the dollar had dropped almost 11 per cent, to the point where the government — using its old tactics — simply began to lock up unlicensed money changers. But it did little good and one boy expressed the sentiment of many shopkeepers by explaining the situation with a single word, "dollar."

As the political situation deteriorates, Yemen's potential to attract desperately needed

investment deteriorates with it. The success of the proposed free trade zone in Aden will depend almost entirely on the country's ability to solicit foreign investment. But such investment is unlikely to appear if the current climate of political and economic instability prevails. The 29 October assassination of Beedh's nephew, for example, added considerably to political tension in the country. The oil industry is also unlikely to invest further in the country since the government appears incapable of guaranteeing the safety of workers from the threat of the tribes. In early November, 350 armed tribesmen demanding jobs and money impeded work at sites operated by BP, Hunt, Lasso and Total. Hijackings of vehicles are again on the rise, making a mockery of statements by the government that it will guarantee the safety of company personnel. Not only are the tribes reported to be better armed than the army, but also they are far more numerous. A skirmish with 50 tribesmen today does not preclude the arrival of 500 more tomorrow.

Downward spiral

Yemen thus appears to be in a downward political and economic spiral. Political dissension between the ruling parties has led to increased friction since the country's unification in May 1990. That friction has

left undone many of the most basic problems in the country, not least revitalisation of its economy in the wake of the Gulf war. But continued dissension among the political leadership, apart from underlining the possibility of economic collapse, gives rise to the haunting spectre of the country's ultimate fragmentation.

Mr. Beedh himself raised that possibility. In interviews with newspapers throughout the region, he more than once suggested that Yemeni unity — once so highly praised — may well be a thing of the past. And, as the idea of fragmentation begins to take root, he has suggested that there could be two Yemens or more. Whether Mr. Beedh or anyone else actually wants to see the country once again divided remains to be seen. A succession of high-level mediators — including Yasser Arafat — have made an effort to get Gen. Salih and Mr. Beedh talking again and to keep the two Yemens together. By the beginning of November, Mr. Beedh remained intransigent in Aden and showed no sign of giving in on his demands. Dismissed by President Salih as a "summer cloud which would soon go away", Yemen's political crisis shows little sign of disappearing. Crowds of Adenis queuing for plane tickets in Sanaa seemed to be voting with their feet — Middle East International, London.

The declaration of principles: Calculated shock treatment for Palestinians and Israelis

By Ludwig W. Tamar

THE declaration of principles hit world public opinion with the force of a whirlwind — so much so, in fact, that a number of observers believe that the suddenness of the accord was part and parcel of the agreement itself. This was shock treatment for both Palestinians and Israelis alike.

There are those who wholeheartedly endorse the agreement and there are those who oppose it. There are those who are awed and predict the worst, while others call for patience and warn against irresponsible acts. There are those who call for bolstering the PLO, while others say that unanimity in the ranks without unity of minds is hypocrisy. There are those who are motivated by self-interest, while there are others who declare "so what" — a drowning man is not afraid to get wet.

But there is no need for us to be stunned by the shock of the "Declaration." The signing of the declaration was very much like an earthquake: those who experience it have no choice but to ride it out. It is an incontrovertible fact of life.

But the shock of the declaration is not the only surprise that we should be willing to accept. There are other surprises. I am quite sure, that took place before the negotiations in Oslo even got underway. Those surprises made the Oslo talks inevitable.

The view from Israel

It is clear that the political leaders of Israel decided that peace was in their best strategic interest. Having made that assumption, they decided to negotiate with the PLO. The Arab states agreed with that view because it was, after all, also in their interest that Israel would negotiate with the Palestinians.

It is also eminently clear, I believe, that the Israeli parliamentary opposition endorsed the idea of negotiating a Declaration of Principles. But it is also clear that the opposition only agreed to support the negotiating position of the government so long as the PLO unequivocally agreed to the word and letter of the declaration.

As part of this agreement, I am quite sure that a breakdown in the talks — or a refusal on the part of the PLO to negotiate — would have resulted in an immediate collapse of the Oslo channel. The Israeli government would have felt itself compelled to use Machiavellian excuses to justify freezing the peace process, and perhaps shelving it altogether. If the talks had failed, I think that we can assume that the current Israeli government would have fallen and life would have become more bitter for the Palestinians.

It should be assumed that while the two parties in Israel

have fundamental differences, they agree on one thing: the solid foundation of Israel's security transcends all disagreements and all political views. Ironically, therefore, I would say that by agreeing to the Declaration, the Palestinian negotiators have actually placed themselves in the same political trench as the Israeli opposition. They agreed that in order for the current process to go forward, Israel's security could not be placed in jeopardy.

After the Declaration

What can we deduce from the signing of the Declaration of Principles? In addition to the above, I will call them "scenarios." The Palestinian and Israeli negotiators came to realise that the options available for further negotiation had been crystallised. There was no need for more haggling. It was now either a positive response, or a negative rejection.

The Oslo negotiations went forward because there was a choice: either each party could insist on realising all they wanted — and take the risk of losing everything — or they could accept negotiations, and come away with at least something. That is the choice that now faces each of them.

The gist of the Declaration is that the Palestinians could achieve their sovereign entity and their land of Palestine in stages over a period of five years. Throughout this five year period, it is incumbent of Israel to see to the realisation of an inviolate and peaceful Palestine.

The time frame of five years, however, also reflects the period of time that Israel will need to cultivate the political atmosphere for completing the

normalisation process with the other Arab states.

The view of the Palestinians

For the Palestinians, the negotiations in Oslo embodied the following three points. First, it signalled the Israeli government's attempt to transform itself from an intransigent enemy to a docile dove. Second, it showed that Israel and the world community had finally recognised the rights of Palestinians to exist as a people with a sovereign entity on their own land. Third, despite the chameleon quality of the Declaration, it showed that there was no other alternative but peace. Or, as Rabin conceded, "enough is enough."

That is how the "surprise of surprises" — the Declaration of Principles — came about. This was capped by the signing ceremony on the White House lawn on September 13. That was the moment when time stood still.

While the voices in favour of the accord had their say, so too did those against it. By definition, those who opposed the accord repudiated its particulars. But that does not mean that those who opposed the accord also opposed the peace process. The truth of the matter is that, starting with the conference at Madrid and for almost twenty months thereafter, the majority of the Palestinian negotiating team was comprised of political hard-liners.

Nor, for those for or against the accord, was it ever intended that the issue of Palestinian inalienable rights be on the agenda of deliberations of the peace process. Palestinian rights are inalienable and cannot be the subject of negotiations. In addition, the peace process was laboriously de-

signed to lay down the framework of a comprehensive peace; and not a final accord.

For those who opposed the declaration it was clear after twenty months of negotiations, the agreement fell below their already dwindling expectations. The agreement seemed to prostitute the inalienability of Palestinian rights. In a moment of pique, one opponent made the acid remark that the "general principles" of the Declaration were not "general principles at all, but unprincipled generalities."

Be that as it may, the fact remains that the pros and cons have been put on the spot by the fait accompli of the Declaration. Since this is the case, I have a suggestion: let us prevail on those who are in agreement to discipline the euphoria of their optimism, and in the meantime, let us remind the rejectionists that the issues at stake beg them to temper the intensity of their pessimism.

Let us, with the worst of intentions, grant the Israelis the benefit of the doubt and, while allowing for the best of intentions, acknowledge Palestinian sovereignty on their own land. Let the annals of history show that the Israelis achieved what they planned for; but let those same annals show that what the Palestinians had to undergo with courage — forty years of the worst kind of mayhem — was actually a litmus of their political staying power. "Enough is enough."

Since a tiny gesture of good will could arrest a flow of ill will, let those with the will to give peace a chance, take that chance.

The writer is a Washington-based lawyer. He contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

Battle, not bargaining, likely to decide Bosnia's fate

By Giles Elgood
Reuters

BELGRADE — The cupboard is bare at the U.N. refugee agency, winter is biting hard and the war in Bosnia is regarded as more likely to be decided on the battlefield than at the conference table.

Most forecasts for 1994, as Bosnia's Muslims, Serbs and Croats approach the end of their second year of conflict, see a continuation of brutality, bad faith and suffering.

Western governments have voiced doubts about whether the costly United Nations operation in Bosnia can go on if the factions show no interest in a settlement and aid officials wonder if humanitarian deliveries are fuelling the war.

Internationally mediated peace talks have been revived after a two-month stalemate but progress is slow and one senior Western diplomat questioned their effectiveness and said a military solution was the only likely outcome.

"The talks are just for show," said the diplomat in Sarajevo. "None of the three sides can be seen as refusing to negotiate."

U.N. officials believe heavy snow over the winter will slow the pace of fighting but the Muslims, who have little to lose, will be preparing for a spring offensive against the Croats.

"If it is a bad winter, the weather will restrict what can happen on the battlefield," said Brigadier John Reith, the senior British U.N. officer in Bosnia.

A senior U.N. official added: "The Muslims have made it clear they plan an offensive in the spring if there is not a peace agreement on their terms."

"Most of the aid into central Bosnia goes to the Muslims, who are the Croats' principal enemy. If there is no peace agreement I expect the Croats will use whatever methods they can to block aid shipments."

The forecast of further offensive action by a reorganised Muslim army, which has already seized parts of central Bosnia from the Croats, was echoed by a senior Bosnian officer.

Deputy army commander Jovan Divjak said his outgunned troops had little chance against the well-equipped Serbs with their tanks and heavy artillery but could take on the less impressive Bosnian Croat HVO militia.

"A real possibility exists of destroying the HVO by carrying out offensives," he told Reuters.

Fighting between Muslims and Croats has severely hampered the U.N. operation to bring aid to some 1.5 million civilians in central Bosnia, but next year the humanitarian situation is expected to worsen.

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) succeeded in securing finance for a greatly pared down programme in the final months of

1993 only by intensive lobbying.

For the first six months of 1994, no funds have been received for the agency's \$200 million programme and none have yet been pledged, said UNHCR spokeswoman Lyn-dall Sachs.

"At present it doesn't look terribly good," she added.

The United Nations estimates there are more than 2.7 million civilians in need in Bosnia, who are much less well equipped to withstand the war's second winter than they were the first.

Refugees and "social cases" — civilians dependent on welfare — were in increasing difficulties in Serbia and Croatia, whose economies were showing the strain of financing their proxies in Bosnia.

"People's reserves are running low," said Ms. Sachs. "1994 is going to be a crunch time for many people, not just refugees but also social cases."

Nowhere is the economic cost of the war more visible than in Serbia, where hyperinflation brought on by U.N. sanctions and crippling military spending has made the national currency, the dinar, virtually worthless.

President Slobodan Milosevic, blamed by the West for starting the war, is expected to emerge from Serbian parliamentary elections on December 19 firmly in power and will remain a key player in the peace process.

He and his ministers are lobbying for the removal of sanctions but it remains unclear whether the Serbs in Bosnia will indeed yield territory to the Muslims as demanded by the government in Sarajevo.

In Croatia, the danger of Zagreb starting another all-out war with secessionist minority Serbs holding a third of the former Yugoslav republic appears to have receded and diplomats hope for modest progress towards peace in the coming months.

For much of this year, the nationalist government threatened to eject U.N. peacekeepers unless they forcibly disarmed the Serbs, raising fears of a new Serbo-Croatian war.

Since October, bellicose rhetoric has been replaced by unequivocal public commitments to talks on normalisation with the Serbs with no time limit or preconditions.

The change of mood has been motivated by threats of Western sanctions against Croatia if it starts another war — senior Zagreb officials now publicly admit fears of punishment — and by concern not to upset economic reconstruction, including a promising new anti-inflation programme.

"I think the international community has been quite forthright, putting a lot of pressure on Croatia," said a Western diplomat. "And the more moderate and rational advisers around President Tudjman have carried the day."

Arafat hopes self-rule snags would be removed

(Continued from page 1)

ences, there are some ambiguities from both sides," he said in a talk to some 250 members of the House of Commons and House of Lords. "But I hope we will be able to overcome all the obstacles."

"We spoke frankly and we agreed on a few more days for more clarifications and negotiations," he said of his meeting with Mr. Rabin, whom he termed "a man of his word."

"We agreed strongly that we were both committed to the DoP (declaration of principles) the two had signed in Washington Sept. 13."

Mr. Arafat acknowledged opposition to the peace accord from both the Israeli and Palestinian sides.

"We expected it," he said. "It is impossible to have 100 per cent for anybody. Not even the prophets can expect 100 per cent."

"But there are no other alternatives. We must carry on. Otherwise there will be complete confusion... and balkanisation."

Mr. Arafat, clad in his customary khaki military uniform and keffiyah, received a warm welcome and polite applause from the British parliamentarians after declaring of the Palestinians, "we are fed up. We are human beings, not slaves. We have a right to a homeland, to live in complete security."

He said the infrastructure of the Israeli-occupied territories was in shambles and needed major influxes of cash to be rebuilt.

"It's a real catastrophe," he said. "We need more and more and more. Everything has been destroyed. I hope you understand our tragedy."

"We need your help. I mean it. And not only moral and political help," intoned Mr. Arafat, recalling what he

termed an old Arabic proverb: "A friend in need is a friend indeed."

It was to be a historic visit for the PLO chief, who two years ago was politically reviled in the West for his support of Iraq during the Gulf war.

Mr. Arafat likewise once had little love for Britain, which the PLO has accused of shared blame, as architects of Israel, for the Palestinian people's troubles.

Tuesday, however, Mr. Arafat was an honoured guest in London where he enjoyed a statesman's reception.

He was to meet Wednesday with leaders of the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, and even with leaders of Britain's Jewish community, although there was bitter controversy over that.

One Jewish group, Rabbis for the People and Land of Israel, said in a statement: "The avowed declarations of the PLO to destroy Israel have not yet been stricken from its charter. Until this is done, there can be no question of even innocent dialogue with them."

Israeli Deputy Defence Minister Mordechai Gur Tuesday played down the differences between Israel and the PLO over security arrangements, saying these problems could be sorted out in a matter of days.

In a telephone interview from Israel broadcast on Radio France Internationale, Mr. Gur said: "I hope we can find solutions within 10 days."

Asked if a solution could be found by Dec. 23, the date by which Mr. Rabin and Mr. Arafat agreed to meet after failing to meet the Dec. 13 deadline, Mr. Gur replied: "I am not talking dates... believe solutions can be found. I don't know whether this will be possible within five days or 10."

He said Israel's major worry in talks with the PLO touched on the country's concern to protect its borders. "The Palestinians do not believe so much that Israel could be threatened," he said.

As far as the PLO was concerned, the problem was "the symbolism of sovereignty, of independence," he said. "I believe we can reach a compromise that will satisfy Israeli security needs."

He added: "We must take into account Israeli sensitivities on sovereignty."

In a statement likely to deepen Palestinian frustration at the slow pace of peace, Mr. Rabin appeared Monday to back away from Israel's promise to complete the military withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho by April 13.

"There are no sacred dates but rather each date is conditioned on reaching an agreement," Mr. Rabin told reporters, referring to the phased implementation of the Israel-PLO accord.

Differences over security issues, the overall authority for border crossing and the size of a Palestinian self-rule area in Jericho forced Mr. Rabin and Arafat to agree in Cairo Sunday on further talks and a 10-day withdrawal delay.

Accusing the PLO of brinkmanship, Mr. Rabin did some stonewalling of his own, saying he had "no intention... to concede on the security issues."

Cabinet minister Shulamit Aloni told reporters: "Arafat calls himself president of Palestine, but he has to understand we are not dealing now with establishing a Palestinian state."

"You want to be like Bantustan?" Mr. Arafat angrily asked Mr. Rabin during an argument Sunday over the size of the West Bank region from which Israel would withdraw, according to a newspaper report Tuesday.

Responding to Mr. Arafat's

question about Bantustan — black enclaves under South African rule — Mr. Rabin said: "What you are asking for is a non-starter."

Mr. Arafat: "I want to control the crossings to Jordan. I want to save my people the humiliation at the bridge crossings."

Mr. Rabin: "You won't get it. Outside security and control over the crossings will remain in our hands."

Mr. Arafat: "Understand me. I'm weak and you are strong. Why do you have to be concerned about security? You can swallow us."

Mr. Rabin: "We are only talking about an interim agreement, and we are talking about the first stage of the agreement. We are not setting borders. We only came to talk about Gaza and Jericho."

Mr. Arafat: "Even in the (Alon) plan, it was written that the control over the Jordan bridges is in our hands."

Mr. Rabin: "We are talking about Jericho and two refugee camps, not more than that."

Mr. Arafat: "Had I known that this is all you propose, I wouldn't have accepted the Oslo accord. I want the whole Jericho region."

Mr. Rabin: "What you are demanding doesn't appear in the declaration of principles. You won't get it."

Rabin spokesman Oded Ben-Ami said he could not confirm the exchange.

In Strasbourg, France, Mr. Arafat said on Monday Israel wanted the PLO to set up a large force to maintain order after Israel withdrew from the occupied territories.

"Israel insists on the fact that we set up a proper strong security organisation," he told the European Parliament. "Some 20,000 to 25,000 (Palestinian) soldiers is what Israel is calling for."

Asked whether he would be able to control extremist Palestinian opposition to the



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat waves to journalists Tuesday upon his arrival at the home of British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd (left) in London (AFP photo)

peace process, Mr. Arafat replied: "The dialogue is now open with all of them (the opponents). But the moment that the peace accord is implemented, it will be a new era in the Middle East."

The chief Israeli peace negotiator on Tuesday urged Palestinians to oppose the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) and give peace a chance.

"Palestinians and all those who want peace must oppose Hamas," General Amnon Shabak, who heads the Israeli team in peace talks with the Palestinians, told Israeli Radio

on the sixth anniversary of the founding of Hamas.

"Some Hamas members are interested in the Israeli-PLO accord," said Gen. Shabak, who is also a deputy chief of staff.

"They must either accept this accord and join the majority Palestinian view, or disappear, or fight the accord and therefore become the enemies of all those who approve it," he said.

On Monday, General Doron Almog, military commander for the occupied Gaza Strip, said he had had talks last week with Hamas officials.

Israeli troops kill two more in Gaza

(Continued from page 1)

driver fled on foot, but were later captured.

The army blew up two cars laden with explosives which they said were meant to kill Israelis.

At Gaza City mosques activists announced that Hamas's Izzeddin Al Qassam brigades were behind the Shajaiyah car-bomb attempt.

Soldiers opened fire several times in the city and neighbouring Jabalya refugee camp as hundreds of Palestinians protested after a Hamas call to mark in blood Monday's sixth anniversary of the founding of the hardline movement.

Fierce clashes continued after dark in the Sheikh Radwan district of Gaza, a Hamas hotbed, where one youth was killed and at least five more shot. An eight-year-old boy was hit in the eye, witnesses said.

Gaza hospitals treated 20 Palestinians for bullet wounds, doctors said.

On the West Bank, undercover soldiers shot a Palestinian student in the leg when trouble erupted during an arrest operation in Bethlehem, Palestinian sources said.

"We know Hamas intends to launch suicide attacks against us," Gaza Strip army commander General Doron Almog told military radio.

Israeli troops killed three Arabs, one a suicide-bomber, and wounded a dozen more on the Gaza Strip on Monday as the deadline passed for the

start of a military withdrawal under the autonomy agreement.

Gen. Almog noted that the delay would likely increase the violence because of "frustration among the people."

Hamas and the smaller group Islamic Jihad have been increasingly using suicide attacks on Israelis to sabotage the Israeli-Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) agreement on Palestinian self-rule in the occupied territories.

Israel and the PLO missed their first big peace deadline on Monday, delaying the start of an Israeli troop withdrawal from Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho for at least 10 days.

Nationalist Jewish settlers who live in the occupied territories and also oppose the accord heckled Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and threw coffee at him during a ground-breaking ceremony in central Israel on Tuesday. The coffee missed Mr. Rabin but splashed one of his bodyguards.

Since the Israeli-PLO accord emerged in Sept., 43 Palestinians and 18 Israelis have been killed in political violence.

Hamas, which claims 40 or 50 per cent support among the nearly two million Palestinians in the occupied territories, has become the most active opponent of the agreement.

The group boasts it has killed 11 of the 18 Israelis.

Hamas was founded on Dec. 14, 1987, by Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, a wheelchair-bound Muslim cleric now serving a

life prison sentence for ordering the killing of Palestinians suspected of cooperating with Israel. Prosecutors dropped charges he ordered the killing of two Israeli soldiers in a last minute plea-bargain.

Some 200 Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders exiled by Israel last year are due to return home Wednesday or Thursday after their expulsion orders expired (see page 10).

Abie Nathan said he talked with Sheikh Yassin three weeks ago at a prison in northern Israel where the quadriplegic, 58-year-old sheikh is serving a life term.

Mr. Nathan said PLO chief Yasser Arafat gave him a message to take to Sheikh Yassin.

"He (Arafat) said he was ready to start a dialogue, ready to go a long way to involve them (Hamas), not only in the peace process, but in the rebuilding of the occupied lands," Mr. Nathan told the Associated Press.

Sheikh Yassin agreed that "now was the time for dialogue," Mr. Nathan said.

Mr. Nathan quoted the sheikh as saying that if released from jail, he would meet with his lieutenants and work out the conditions under which Hamas would participate in the self-rule.

Hamas wants assurances from Mr. Arafat that the PLO administration will be democratic, Mr. Nathan said. "They also want to know that a good percentage of Hamas members will be involved in every sphere of life."

Battle brewing over alcohol law

(Continued from page 1)

bid. But Mr. Shakhaneh said, the "question is not one of halal and haram (religiously sanctioned or not) only." The interests of the state should be taken into account, he said.

Fawzi Tuameh, spokesman for the 17-member National Action Front, said his bloc had not adopted a position on the draft law, but would work to protect public freedoms.

"The general position will be in harmony with the Constitution, in support of public freedoms," he said.

Dr. Said pointed out that Muslims are banned from drinking alcohol while Christians could produce and consume alcohol in their homes. Their freedom will be protected, he said.

Mr. Tuameh and other deputies said that the government must take the lead in explaining the economic dangers inherent in a ban on

alcohol because many lawmakers would be in "tough position" if they chose to oppose a requirement clearly defined in Islam.

"It will not be an easy issue," said Deputy Ali Abu Al Ragheb, pointing out that the economic and social ramifications of a ban on alcohol would entail should be carefully studied when the new legislation is discussed.

The alcohol industry, with a total investment of JD 250 million, contributes about JD 40 million in fees, taxes and customs to the treasury annually and there are about 12 distilleries and breweries in the Kingdom.

Deputies said the government should highlight the social and economic problems that would emerge in the event of banning alcohol, citing the relatively low rate of alcohol-related social problems in the country and the enormity of such problems in neighbouring dry states to support its argument.

The government must move quickly and strongly in

defence of its policy," said one deputy.

Observers say many deputies might shy away from opposing an Islamists' bid to ban alcohol if the government does not take a clear stand against it and explains that such a move would hurt the country's national interest.

The House is expected to refer the draft law to its Judiciary Committee where some deputies say the difficulties associated with discussing it would be demonstrated.

Five of the 18-member committee are members of the IAF and its president is independent Islamist Abdul Baqi Jammo. These deputies are expected to try to have the law comply with Islamic law against the opposition of other members.

Accordingly, the committee will be divided in its recommendation, leading to heated and tense discussions when the recommendation is presented on the House floor, observers say.

Yeltsin foes take massive lead

(Continued from page 1)

reformers in the government. Mr. Zhirinovsky also said his party expected to play a big role in the naming of a new government and has ready to form an alliance with any of the parties.

Mr. Zhirinovsky seemed unlikely, however, to become prime minister or get a significant government post because Mr. Yeltsin nominates cabinet members.

Mr. Zhirinovsky vowed Tuesday he would fight to roll back reforms and would seek the presidency to restore the country's lost prestige.

Hardline communists and nationalists were meanwhile weighing a possible alliance that could give them control of the legislature.

At his first news conference since the elections, Mr. Zhirinovsky outlined his party's immediate priorities which he said ranged from cracking down on crime to "a new foreign policy" to resurrect Russia's role as a superpower.

Mr. Zhirinovsky denied that the LDP would try to return the Baltic states and other parts of the former Soviet Union to Russian domination through use of military force, but predicted they would be returned once Russia cut off its "free" aid to them.

They will be crying with tears on their cheeks begging the new Russian president to take them back," Mr. Zhirinovsky told an auditorium packed with reporters, and a number of supporters who applauded his remarks enthusiastically.

Some of the newly-independent states of the former Soviet Union were "doomed to failure" once deprived of Russia's

energy resources, which he said he would try to ensure.

Mr. Zhirinovsky, a 47-year-old lawyer dismissed by most of Russia's ruling class as a crackpot fascist until Sunday, sought to downplay his reputation as an anti-Semite and political extremist and claimed the LDP was open to "any positive" partners.

He also stressed his newly-acquired role as a power broker in Russian politics, describing the LDP as the country's "dominant" political force and claiming that Mr. Yeltsin had a "good feeling" towards him and his party.

Responding to a question from a Jewish reporter, he stated: "You have an excellent nation, a beautiful state in Israel — you are richer than any other people in the world."

Dismissing charges of anti-Semitism, he added: "We think this phenomenon is provoked by Jews themselves."

The election results somewhat overshadowed Mr. Yeltsin's success in gaining approval for a new constitution granting him strong powers — powers, he said on Monday, that the would use to prevent attempts to deflect Russia from democracy.

Mr. Zhirinovsky says his next goal is the presidency. Mr. Yeltsin has pledged to step down in 1996.

Washington criticised Mr. Zhirinovsky, saying he had views "anathema" to democratic principles.

"I will say that many of Mr. Zhirinovsky's past statements embody views that are obviously completely an anathema to principles of democracy, to our own views on issues like human rights and the democratic process, economic reform, and

relations among sovereign states," State Department spokesman Mike McCurry told reporters.

Russian Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov, whose party could hold the balance of power in the new parliament, ruled out an alliance with reformers wanting to pursue the government's economic "shock therapy."

In an interview with the former hardline parliamentary newspaper Sovetskaya Rossiya, making its first reappearance Tuesday after being banned for its views following the October crushing of a parliamentary revolt, Mr. Zyuganov said that his party was "open to dialogue with all."

Mr. Zyuganov noted that his party had cooperated in the old conservative-dominated parliament with "all patriotic movements": centrist industrialists, Christian democrats and constitutional democrats.

"We are sure that we will find a better understanding with the absolute majority of blocs for whom the country's peace and welfare is the top priority," he said.

"We are open to dialogue with all, but announce in advance that... if we continue along the road of 'shock therapy' which is basically anti-popular and absolutely destructive for the Russian state, nobody will help us."

Mr. Zyuganov's party backs a return to a state-run centralised economy.

Mr. Zyuganov attacked the architect of radical reform in Russia, Deputy Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, who on Monday had invited the communists to join a "broad anti-fascist coalition" to block the nationalists.

Regent meets Congress team

(Continued from page 1)

The Regent discussed with the delegation members a number of issues of concern to Jordan and the United States. He stressed that the Kingdom was fully committed to the peace process in accordance with its principled stands which call for the achievement of a just and durable peace which could address all issues of concern to the people of the region.

Prince Hassan also presented Jordan's concern of regional cooperation, noting that such cooperation should take into account the Arab Nation's interests.

The U.S. team, which arrived here Monday, is led by Senator Dennis DeConcini and is touring several countries in the region.

Also on Tuesday, the Regent met with a seven-member delegation representing the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Reviewing with the delegation the developments of the Middle East, Prince Hassan stressed the need for a settlement that can take into account the interests of all peoples in the region.

"The Middle East is in dire need of a warm and not a cold

peace so that its peoples can enjoy its benefits, a peace that can be protected," Prince Hassan said.

With reference to Jerusalem he said Jordan was committed to finding a just and humanitarian solution for the questions of the Holy City benefiting all followers of the three monotheistic religions.

On democracy and political pluralism in Jordan, Prince Hassan said that Jordan had made a strategic choice by opting for true democracy and noted that the recent parliamentary elections provided proof of the Kingdom's determination to pursue this course.

The Jordanian-Palestinian relationship, Prince Hassan said, is based on the concept of supporting the Palestinian people's rights.

With reference to future links with the Palestinians, the Regent said that Amman had already offered a number of ideas but they had not been given due consideration.

These, he said, included the establishment of a united Arab kingdom as proposed by His Majesty King Hussein in 1972.

The Regent expressed hope that 1994 would be the year of peace, provided that all parties were committed to exerting serious efforts to achieve that goal.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel negotiating Morocco air links

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel and Morocco are in talks to establish air links, Israeli Transport Minister Yisrael Kessar said Tuesday. "Yes, negotiations are being conducted at their initiation," Mr. Kessar told Israeli army radio. "We are pushing for it to be a direct connection and not via Spain or France. We are trying to persuade the Moroccan government to allow us direct lines between... (Tel Aviv's) Ben-Gurion airport and Morocco," he said. The New York Times reported this month that Morocco's King Hassan II had decided to expand his country's economic ties with Israel — including flights between Israel and Morocco by El Al and Royal Air Maroc — in a step towards normalising relations.

Kuwait deputies to discuss secret report

KUWAIT (R) — A secret report on Kuwaiti state investment activities over the past six months will be discussed by deputies on Wednesday under a law giving parliament the right to check for possible corruption, deputies said on Tuesday. "The public funds protection committee meets on Wednesday to discuss the report," committee member Ismail Al Shattil told Reuters at Tuesday's weekly plenary session of parliament. "This report is highly confidential... the committee has only one copy," said fellow committee member Nasser Al Sanea.

Lebanese foreign minister flies to Britain

BEIRUT (AP) — Foreign Minister Faris Bouez left for London Tuesday on a five-day official visit at the invitation of British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd. The Middle East peace process "will be the prime topic" of his discussions in Britain, Mr. Bouez said before departing. "Britain's understanding of the intricacies of Middle Eastern issues will enable the British government to play an energetic role at this critical stage of the peace process," he said.

U.N. denies Israeli accusation

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel accused United Nations peace keepers in Lebanon Monday of denying aid to a tank crew that came under guerrilla attack, and the U.N. dismissed the complaint as a misunderstanding. The incident occurred Friday when an Israeli tank was hit by a missile launched from an area controlled by Hizbollah in South Lebanon. One Israeli crewman was killed and another was injured. The army said Monday that members of the Finnish contingent of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) refused a soldier's appeal for medical assistance and to radio an Israeli outpost for help. The peacekeepers were approached as the closest outpost to the attack site. "The UNIFIL soldiers' behaviour contradicts basic United Nations principles," the army statement said. Timor Goksel, spokesman for the peacekeepers, rejected the accusation saying what had happened was "a case of a communications breakdown."

3 Islamist activists killed in Egypt

CAIRO (AFP) — Security forces have killed three Islamist militants in southern Egypt suspected of deadly attacks on senior police officers, police said Wednesday. They said the fundamentalists were shot dead in two separate incidents in the Qena region on Sunday. Two of the suspects were killed in a clash with police near the town of Qena after fleeing on a boat across the River Nile. Police said a third militant was shot dead as he resisted arrest in the village of Densha.

Stateless Arab hanged for murder

KUWAIT (AP) — A stateless Arab convicted of murder was hanged Tuesday, the Kuwaiti News Agency reported. Kuwait's second execution, since its liberation from Iraqi occupation in February 1991 was carried out in prison and attended by a representative of the prosecution, KUNA said. Kamel Matar Ikhakh was found guilty of shooting Rafeh Nasser Banoon in a remote desert area and setting his body on fire. The hanging was scheduled for Nov. 16, but was postponed. No reasons were given then. The ages of the victim and the convicted were not known. KUNA did not give the motive for the killing. In May, an Iraqi found guilty of infiltration and killing a border guard was hanged.

Turkey promised to expel rebels — Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Turkey has promised to expel members of the Iranian rebel group, Mujahadeen-e-Khalq, who are accused of waging cross-border attacks, Interior Minister Mohammad Ali Besharati said Tuesday. Mr. Besharati, quoted by newspapers here, said the killing in Baghdad of a Turkish diplomat by the Iraqi-based Mujahadeen would expedite the expulsion of the rebels from Turkey. Iraq said Sunday that members of the Mujahadeen had been arrested for Saturday's murder of Caglar Yucel, an administrative attaché at the Turkish embassy. The mujahadeen said it shot the diplomat "by mistake" and blamed the mix-up on the Iranian authorities.

Russia evacuates families from Algeria

MOSCOW (R) — Russia has withdrawn some 200 members of Russian families from Algeria since Saturday because of death threats from Islamic militants, ITAR-TASS news agency said Tuesday. Foreign Ministry spokesman Grigory Karasin was quoted by the agency as telling a news conference that 69 people would be evacuated on Tuesday from the strife-torn country. He said that most wives and children of Russian embassy, military and trade mission staff would be evacuated before the end of the year. Mr. Karasin did not say how many Russians were expected to be withdrawn in total.

Scope of pullout as crucial as crossings

(Continued from page 1)

unit through Palestinian lands. "This interpretation deals a serious blow to Palestinian sovereignty," said one PLO official.

In Strasbourg, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat ruled out joint control with Israel of border crossing points, but said he could accept "coordination." "Coordination, but not control," Mr. Arafat said at a press conference.

A main problem that Palestinian negotiators have been facing is how to arrive at an autonomy deal without prejudicing the final status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, especially that sovereignty is considered part of the "final status" negotiations.

Mr. Arafat's argument has been that by ensuring Palestinian control over the crossing points Palestinians could ensure that independence would not be blocked.

"Arafat fears that Israeli control over all crossings will reduce the Palestinian self-rule into South African style Bantustans — that will isolate the

Palestinians and hamper an evolution towards a state," said a well-informed Fateh official.

But other officials, who do not underestimate the significance of the crossings, believe that priority should be given to countering Israel's attempts to practically strip Palestinians from control over their land and ensure continued Israeli settlement. In the Palestinian view, the Israeli scheme for troops redeployment is designed to tear apart at least 10 per cent of the Gaza Strip and consolidate the existence of the settlements.

Palestinians are trying to keep the settlements isolated and fragmented in order to keep the door open for negotiating the future of the colonies, which the PLO will press to be dismantled.

Consequently the Israeli scheme does not only end the isolation of the settlements, but also imposes a de facto annexation of the settlements into Israel, thus jeopardising the final outcome of the negotiations.

Some Palestinian analysts argue that this issue, rather

than the crossing points, should be the make or break point in determining the future of the talks with Israel.

They maintain that the utmost that the Palestinians could get is a joint strictly civilian control of the crossing points confined to points between Egypt and Gaza and Jordan and Jericho.

One concern among many PLO officials is that by giving more prominence to the crossing points the organisation could play into Israeli hands by having to accept a compromise on other more substantive issues in return for an Israeli approval of some sort of participation in the aspired control.

The Israeli argument is that border control issues deal directly with security and sovereignty — the latter considered to be part of the "final status" negotiations.

Therefore, Palestinian officials favour

U.S., EC clear way to GATT world trade treaty

GENEVA (R) — The United States and the European Community Tuesday cleared the way for a long-awaited world trade treaty.

After marathon talks throughout the night, the announcement was made at a news conference by the exhausted but clearly relieved top trade officials of the world's most powerful trading powers — Mickey Kantor of the United States and Sir Leon Brittan of the 12-nation European Community (EC).

"I think it's obvious I'm delighted to announce the United States... has reached a comprehensive agreement with the European Community," declared Mr. Kantor, U.S. trade representative.

A smiling Brittan, EC trade commissioner, said he believed the accord between the two "augurs well for the successful conclusion of the (GATT Uruguay) round tomorrow (Wednesday)."

Both men had been under intense pressure to settle their differences so that a global trade treaty could be agreed by a looming deadline 0500 GMT on Thursday.

The treaty, still to be finalized among the 115 nations involved in the seven-year round, aims to cut tariffs and other barriers to world trade in goods and services.

Major financial institutions say it will give an immediate psychological boost to international markets and could be pumping up to \$300 billion more into the ailing world economy annually by the year 2005, a decade after it goes into effect.

"It means, I believe, a much-needed breath of fresh air for a somewhat beleaguered European economy and, as well, a dose of oxygen for the world economy," Sir Brittan said.

But for the total package to clear the U.S. Congress as one package without risking wrecking amendments, President Bill Clinton has to tell legislators on Capitol Hill he intends to sign it by midnight in Washington on Dec. 15 (0500 GMT Dec. 16).

The round was launched under GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, in 1986 and has missed

by three years its original December 1990 target for an accord.

Although the United States and the European Community last week cleared a farm trade dispute which had long prevented progress, new problems surfaced as zero-hour approached.

The most difficult of these — the sharing of revenues from potentially lucrative new technologies in the audio-visual industries as well as cinema and video-cassette royalties — proved intractable and Mr. Kantor and Sir Brittan set it aside.

But it was not clear, as claimed in Paris by Communications Minister Alain Carignon, that the EC had achieved the "cultural exception" from the GATT treaty that France had demanded.

Mr. Kantor told the news conferences that he and Sir Brittan had been unable to overcome their differences on this issue. "To advance the round, we agreed to disagree but our differences remain," he said.

He said he and Sir Brittan had "agreed to disagree" and

would work "shoulder to shoulder" to clinch a global accord that will cut tariffs by at least 30 per cent and bring services, farm trade and textiles under GATT rules for the first time.

Mr. Kantor said later he spoke on the telephone to Mr. Clinton at about 0600 (0500 GMT) to discuss the new deal.

The treaty has the strong support of most developing countries and former communist states who see it as opening major markets to their products and a chance to earn the foreign currency they need for economic development.

But negotiators still have to clear some hurdles. India and Pakistan want better market access to the United States and the EC for textiles and Latin American countries want wider openings for farm and tropical products.

At GATT headquarters on the shores of Lake Geneva printing presses were already producing piles of the draft final treaty text, around 450 pages.

They were being rushed to diplomatic missions accredited

to the world trade watchdog, set up in 1948 and now expected to be absorbed into a new multilateral trade organisation on a par with other top world economic institutions.

Officials said GATT chief Peter Sutherland, who has travelled the globe in the six months since he took over as director general to badger and cajole world leaders into wrapping up the talks, was delighted with the breakthrough.

To get to the agreement, both sides appeared to have made concessions — the United States on financial services and on the audio-visual sector and the EC on civil aviation subsidies.

In financial services, a lucrative and rapidly growing sector covering banking and insurance, Washington had insisted it would only fully open its market to countries who fully opened theirs, creating a "two-tier" system.

This would have violated GATT's most favoured nation (MFN) principle — that concessions made to one trade partner in the world trade body should be extended to all others.

Mr. Kantor finally agreed the United States would suspend an exemption from MFN it planned to seek for six months, pending better offers of reciprocal openings from other countries.

On aircraft subsidies, partly negotiated outside the round, the two agreed to maintain a 1992 bilateral accord limiting the funds governments can give manufacturers.

They would continue discussions over the coming year to see how that accord — the results of which have been criticised by aerospace giants on both sides of the Atlantic — can be incorporated into a GATT deal among many nations.

Mr. Kantor told the news conference conclusion of the treaty now "is essential to sustain economic growth and the creation of good jobs in America, in Europe, throughout the world."

"Over the next decade, the global economy will be \$6 trillion wealthier... for having reduced barriers and opened markets in this round," he added.

Algeria plans IMF agreement without rescheduling

ALGIERS (R) — Algeria said Monday it plans to negotiate an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) while avoiding a comprehensive rescheduling of its debts.

The strategy, announced by the prime minister's office, is designed to avoid stringent economic reforms while seeking debt relief from selected creditors.

"The Algerian government has finally chosen multilateral financing of its foreign debt, once more ruling out the extreme option of rescheduling," official news agency APS said in a commentary on the prime minister's announcement.

"(Rescheduling) would have placed the country's economic policy in the hands of the Paris and London clubs, with all the stringent conditions that go with it, in an environment already full of threat," it added.

Algeria pays about \$9 billion per year to service its \$25.7 billion foreign debt.

The debt service, which eats

up more than 75 per cent of its export earnings, has hampered the country's economy because of shortages of spare parts and inputs.

"In absorbing more than three quarters of export earnings, the foreign debt service imperils not just economic development but the social and political stability of the country," the prime minister's office said in a statement.

"If this option has been definitively chosen in exchange for a structural adjustment programme spread out over time, it shows that the IMF has backed the need for the gradual correction of the economy's imbalances," APS added.

An IMF team left Algiers, Sunday without reaching an agreement.

APS said a straightforward rescheduling would have required an excessive devaluation of the dinar, a severe tightening of credit and balancing the government budget, which would imply cancelling many social support payments for the disadvantaged.

Ukraine plans new economic measures for next year

KIEV (R) — The government said Monday it planned to boost Ukraine's crumbling economy with a budget and anti-inflation measures to promote reforms and limit Soviet-style subsidies.

Government leaders at a news conference also deflected rumours that Ukraine planned to introduce its full-fledged currency, the hryvna, this week to replace the hyperinflationary interim unit, the karbovanets.

Economy Minister Roman Shepk said the government wanted to stabilise the economy with emphasis on privatising state-owned firms and make those remaining in state hands earn their keep.

Most state firms next year will not be guaranteed supplies of energy under the state budget, but will have to earn money to buy oil and gas themselves, Mr. Shepk said.

"We know who the potential bankrupts are. Either we can do nothing or try out these measures," he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Vasyl Yevtuchov dismissed suggestions that the government was introducing an "economic state of emergency" in Ukraine, which is suffering declining production and a severe fuel shortage.

"We are not talking about an economic state of emergency," he said. "We are talking about concrete measures to address the situation we are in," he said, adding the measures were reworked versions of drafts rejected earlier by parliament.

But he and other ministers had few details on the measures and budget for 1994, to be presented to parliament this week.

Mr. Yevtuchov said the government wanted to move away from state orders, stand-by of Soviet economics, for production by state enterprises.

"State orders will remain, but there will be a different understanding of them," Mr. Yevtuchov said. "They way we did it before didn't work — we would issue the orders, but we didn't have the funds to buy the production."

Finance Minister Hryhory Pytachenko said the proposed budget would limit inflation by forbidding emissary credits, which this year bloated the money supply and helped drive monthly inflation to 70 per cent.

At least one Ukrainian and one Russian news agency had published reports that the hryvna was about to be introduced.

The karbovanets has steadily plummeted since it was introduced last year, rendered all but worthless by hyperinflation. Black marketers exchanged karbovanets Monday at 32,000 to the dollar.

"We plan to introduce the hryvna on Thursday — but on which Thursday, I won't tell," National Bank Chairman Viktor Yushchenko said amid laughter.

Mr. Yushchenko said the central bank and government planned to start setting the official exchange rate of the karbovanets from this week

Japan's prime minister take the plunge on rice

TOKYO (R) — Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, overriding fierce domestic opposition, said early Tuesday a reluctant Japan would open its rice market to limited imports and help clinch a GATT world trade treaty.

After weeks of agonised debate, Mr. Hosokawa's polarised coalition partners finally agreed at a meeting at 3.30 a.m. (1830 GMT Monday) to back his plan to partially open Japan's protected rice sector and help wind up global trade talks.

"I have formally decided to accept the GATT proposal (to partially open our rice market)," Mr. Hosokawa said after winning the endorsement of the coalition and his cabinet.

"If Japan would have rejected this plan, the Uruguay Round would have collapsed and our country would have become the target of world criticism," he said on national television, apologising for what he described as the unavoidable.

With the decision, Japan has finally yielded on what had long been regarded a sacred symbol — blocking rice imports to ensure domestic self-sufficiency for food security reasons.

It has also removed one of the main obstacles to the successful conclusion of the seven-year-old Uruguay Round of global trade talks, due to wind up Wednesday.

For its part, Japan agreed to import from four to eight per cent of its domestic rice needs from 1995 in exchange for a

minimum six-year grace period before replacing its import ban with tariffs as originally proposed by GATT (the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), Mr. Hosokawa said.

He said Japan would try to negotiate an extension of the grace period beyond the sixth year to avoid imposing tariffs.

"The history of rice is the history of Japan... so we made great effort to win an exemption (on the tariff plan)," said a serious-looking Hosokawa. "Right now, we're not thinking that we should accept tariffs in the seventh year."

Tokyo University policy expert Masahiro Kawai hailed the decision as the beginning of the end of government control over the agricultural sector.

"This means an end to the wartime system of food control that had long outgrown its usefulness," he said. "Hopefully it'll lead to efficiency and independence in the farm sector."

The Japanese government holds a monopoly over the production and distribution of rice, controlling production levels and rice prices, in order to ensure self-sufficiency.

The system protects rice farmers, who cultivate tiny inefficient paddies, and provides them with generous subsidies. The same system, however, forces Japanese consumers to pay up to seven times world prices for their rice.

While the decision to prise open the market has been a foregone conclusion for months, strong dissent from the largest coalition party, the hard-left Socialists, forced Mr.

Hosokawa to postpone a formal announcement three times in the past week.

In marathon talks extending into early Tuesday, Socialist lawmakers threatened to quit their party if it dared to side with Mr. Hosokawa on rice. Party leaders, worried about sparking the downfall of the four-month-old government, stalled for time in order to avert a possible split.

In the end, party chairman Tomichi Murayama took sole responsibility and announced the Socialists would back Mr. Hosokawa on rice and remain within the ruling coalition.

"The party is opposed to any rice market concessions but we have greater responsibilities," Mr. Murayama told reporters. "The Hosokawa government is putting all its efforts now into achieving political reforms and measures to end the recession."

While a number of rural-based Socialists looked poised to defect from the party, media reports said the future of the ruling coalition would not be threatened.

Although Japan has few full-time rice farmers — only about one in 10 — the farm lobby wields considerable political clout under an outdated electoral system where the rural vote has up to three times the weight of a city ballot.

But Mr. Hosokawa's government hopes to enact a new electoral law in the coming weeks that would reduce the farmers' clout and give more power to city voters — another issue that had the Socialists up in arms Monday.

Yeltsin provides tax relief in new populist move

MOSCOW (R) — President Boris Yeltsin, facing a new parliament where nationalists and communists are expected to outnumber reformers, has decreed tax reliefs for millions of Russians despite finance ministry proposals to raise taxes.

A Yeltsin decree which took effect Saturday raised the income bracket for the minimum 12 per cent tax to three million rubles (\$2,440), a year from one million (\$813) previously.

The tax relief would be retroactive for the whole of 1993.

The highest income tax rate of 30 per cent for those earning over six million rubles a year (\$4,880) was unchanged, despite finance ministry proposals to raise the top rate to 40 per cent.

The decree provided further relief for 1994, setting a 10-million ruble (\$8,130) threshold for the 30 per cent tax rate and a five million (\$4,065) threshold for the 12 per cent rate.

Annual incomes of between five to 10 million rubles will be taxed at 20 per cent next year. This rate applied to incomes between three to six million rubles in 1993.

The new tax rules are embarrassing for Finance Minister Boris Fyodorov.

Child poverty up in Canada

OTTAWA (AFP) — More than one in five Canadian children, or 1.3 million, are living in poverty, a new report says.

The Campaign 2000 report for 1991 was commissioned after parliament passed a resolution pledging to eliminate poverty by the end of the century.

It found that between March 1989 and March 1992, the number of children from families who needed government aid had increased by 50 per cent.

And the number of children having at least one parent unemployed was up 41 per cent between 1989 and 1991.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 15, 1993

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

GENERAL TENDENCIES: Plans that you have been working on for several days now have a good chance of being put into effect. Make sure your bills are paid on-time and plan how to add to your savings accounts...

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Now you have found you can find out exactly what members of your family would like you to do to improve conditions beneath your own roof and enhance.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) A perfect day to get out and do the Christmas or other shopping you have to do and finding the right presents for your various intimate loved ones.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You see a better and more well rounded course of action for attending to your property and financial activities and put new ideas right into effect.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) You are endowed with considerable charm and magnetism today and tonight so you go after what you want with a good chance to obtain it quickly.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Get off a little while alone and devise a course of action whereby the things you want of both a personal and career nature can be more easily yours.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Your day to be less reticent and to get out of what-

er rut into which you have grooved, yourself, be generous and see if many friends and acquaintances are possible.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) The world is your oyster today so get out early and do whatever faces you of a civic, credit or community nature and you make out well.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Many new ideas occur to you that can be most useful to you so don't overlook any of them make notations and then go after the most appealing.

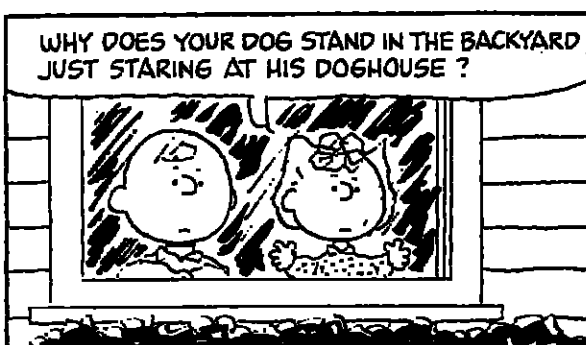
SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Your attachment will appreciate a little more emotions favour. In your relationship with that person so show your most affectionate side.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Be less practical and show more sentiment in dealing with an emotional partner and associates now and you gain far more loyalty, support from them.

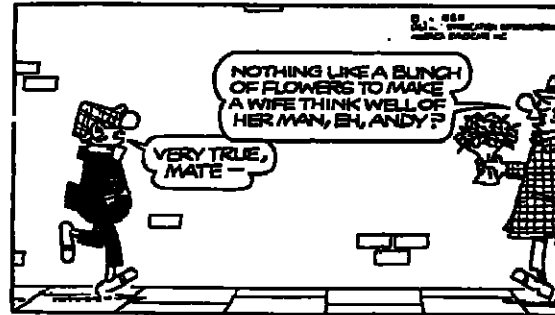
AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Your day to look at all facets of your activity and decide what your priorities are and then put them quickly into actual execution.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Consider well the enjoyment that means the most to you and arrange to make them an active part of your life during the coming festive period.

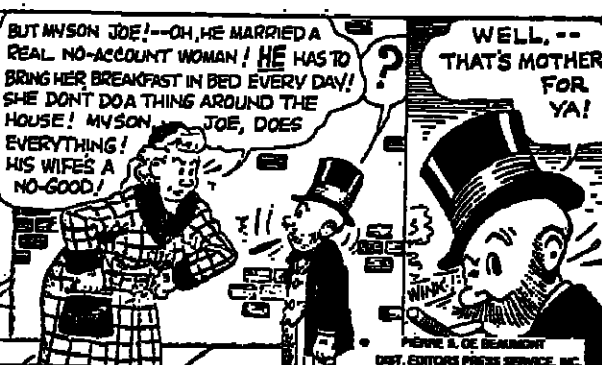
Peanuts



Andy Capp

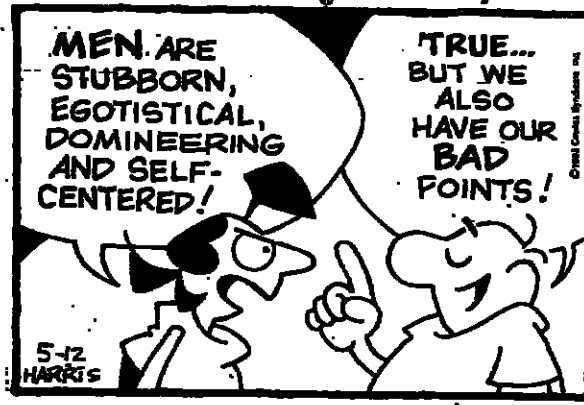


Mutt'n'Jeff



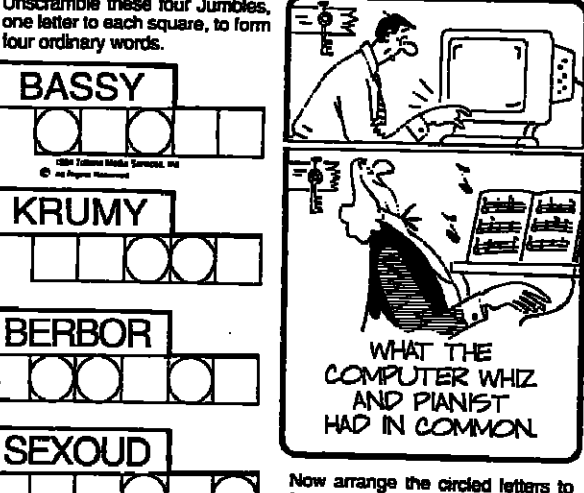
THE BETTER HALF.

By Harris



JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

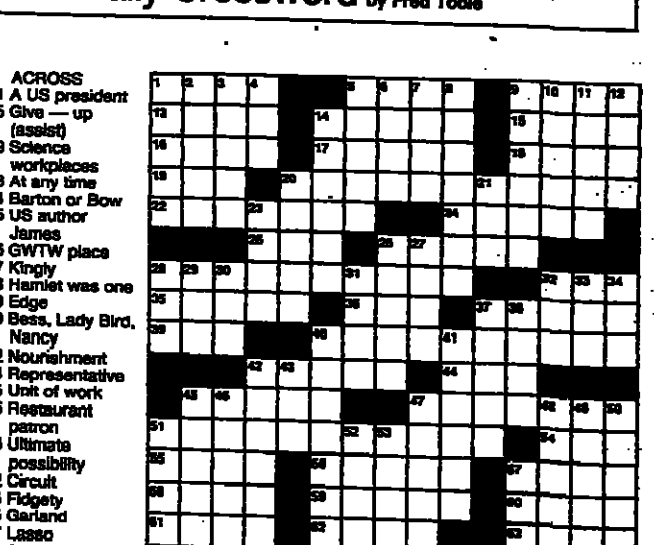


Print answer here: _____

Yesterday's Jumbles: EXERT POKER VERSUS INTENT

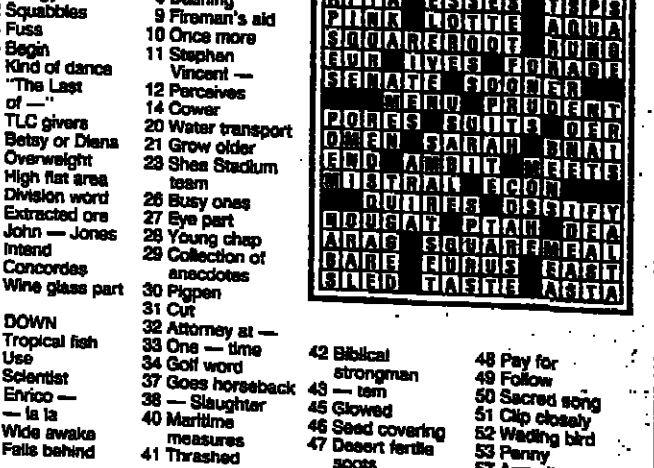
Answer: What cowboys do on the range — STEER STEER

THE Daily Crossword by Fred Toole



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Yesterday's Puzzle Solved:



Mandela: Democracy will go ahead with or without right

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — African National Congress (ANC) President Nelson Mandela warned Tuesday that South Africa's democracy process would go ahead despite opposition from the black and white right-wing, but said he was prepared to pursue negotiations.

"The elections are going to take place, with or without the Freedom Alliance," Mr. Mandela said on his return here from a trip to Europe, during which he received, along with President F.W. de Klerk, the Nobel Peace Prize.

He was referring to the alliance between the black homelands of KwaZulu, Bophuthatswana and Ciskei, the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party and the white pro-apartheid Conservative Party (CP) and Afrikaner Volksfront (AVF).

"We have made concessions to meet their demands," Mr. Mandela said. "If they want more, they must accept the fact that we will go without them" to the country's first non-racial election scheduled for April 27.

Mr. Mandela told an airport news conference on his arrival that he was "aware of the dangers... (of) threats from the right wing," but that South Africa would continue on the path to democracy.

He was speaking the day after suspected white supremacists killed two blacks and wounded five in a racial murder near Randfontein, west of Johannesburg, condemned by both the ANC and the AVF.

Mr. Mandela said he had met shortly before leaving for

Oslo — where he received the Nobel Award Friday — with right-wing leaders Constand Viljoen of the AVF, Ferdi Hartzenberg of the CP and Andries Bruiwer of the Transvaal Agricultural Union.

He gave no details on the talks.

About an hour before Mr. Mandela landed at the airport here, a joint AVF-ANC delegation returned to Johannesburg from a fact-finding mission to Belgium and Switzerland to look at the workings of multi-cultural democracies.

Cornel Mulder, an AVF representative on the team, said the 10-day trip had helped widen options for finding a solution to the rightist group's demands for a Volkstaat — a separate white homeland.

ANC representative Penuel Maduna said the journey had been an investigation into the feasibility of a Volkstaat and that he had no objections as long as such a homeland was approved by majority decision and was non-racist and non-sexist.

Mr. Mulder told reporters that the Freedom Alliance could still re-enter the democracy process, and that although the AVF's main stance remained unchanged, the trip may have modified "some key points."

He did not elaborate. Team members said they would report Tuesday to their respective organisations before the AVF and the ANC had a bilateral meeting Wednesday to discuss the outcome of the trip.

Mr. Mandela, questioned about the attack on blacks ear-

ly Monday by a group of armed white men wearing what looked like uniforms of the new-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement, said that in the end, the blame lay with the government.

"We have a government which lacks decision, which has no will to maintain law and order," he said. "These atrocities will only come to an end when there is a democratic government in this country."

Meanwhile gunmen raided a police station in Johannesburg's violence-torn East Rand early Tuesday and escaped with a dozen weapons, police said.

A police report said five gunmen erupted into the Kippax Police Station early Tuesday, overpowered the officer on duty and forced him to open the weapons safe before making off with one R1 and two R2 assault rifles, five shotguns and four nine mm handguns.

The raid came as both right and left wing parties condemned the killing Monday by suspected white supremacists of two blacks, one of them an 11-year-old boy in what police called a cold-blooded racial attack.

The ANC and AVF used nearly identical terms in condemning the killings near Randfontein, in which five other people were wounded.

In a statement, the ANC said it was "deeply shocked and horrified" by the killings and "the increasing number of vicious attacks on people for no other reason than they are black."

Spokesman Steven Manning said the AVF was "outraged

at this attack," adding: "This level of barbarism... is not only disgusting but also (reminiscent) of the level of barbarism utilised by the ANC's 'people's courts'."

"The fact that our opponents practise similar acts of barbarism does not justify the discarding of Christian values," he said.

A survivor of the attack said white men in camouflage fatigues, led by a blond man dressed in a black uniform, forced two cars carrying blacks off the road, told the blacks to run into a nearby field and then opened fire on them.

The attack occurred on the road between Randfontein and the Western Transvaal town of Ventersdorp, headquarters of the neo-Nazi Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB).

AWB commandos wear camouflage uniforms and the AWB's elite Ystergard (Iron Guard) wear black fatigues.

In other acts of violence police said they found three bodies Tuesday in the East Rand townships of Tokoza, Katlehong and Vosloorus, and police in Durban said four people were killed overnight, including two men attacked by a mob armed with AK-47 assault rifles.

The home of a white town councillor in the western suburbs of Johannesburg was attacked late Monday by a mob of about 50 people that hurled Molotov cocktails at the house, police said.

They said the crowd scattered when the councillor opened fire, but did not know whether there were any injuries.



Rescue workers form a line to clear debris from a tunnel dug through the collapsed Highland Towers apartment block in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (AFP photo)

Malaysia rescuers work in bid to reach buried survivors

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — Rescuers were working frantically last Tuesday in a bid to reach survivors buried under tonnes of mangled steel and concrete three days after a luxury apartment block tumbled over after being hit by a landslide.

The multinational effort was spurred Monday night when at least one survivor responded to French rescuers by tapping five times on a concrete beam.

"It is a matter of time before they are rescued," Kerk Choo Ting, deputy works minister, declared after visiting the scene of the disaster where the 12-storey block fell off a hillside 10 kilometres from Kuala Lumpur.

Rescue officials had all but given up hope of finding anyone alive under the rubble until French tracker dogs, flown here, homed in on possible survivors.

Major Serge Garrigues, heading the French rescue team, said that his men who entered the rubble Monday night tapped five times when they reached a beam.

"Someone on the other side responded with five knocks. It

is the psychology of people in such circumstances to respond with an equal number of knocks," he said.

Maj. Garrigues said that five knocks were also picked up several metres away.

"But they could be from the same source because such noise can easily be carried along a beam," he said.

A Malaysian rescue official said that there could be five people under the rubble, separated from rescuers by a thick wall and debris.

He said that two French dogs, hailed as heroes of the search by a local TV station, were acclimatising well.

Four more dogs and 39 rescue experts are expected to arrive here early Wednesday to join the rescue efforts.

Some 50 people, mostly women and children, are believed trapped or dead under the rubble after rescuers pulled out two women, a Japanese and an Indonesian, and a baby within hours of the disaster.

U.K., Ireland make good progress on N. Ireland

LONDON (R) — British Prime Minister John Major and Irish leader Albert Reynolds made good progress towards a Northern Ireland peace agreement during a phone call Tuesday, senior British officials said.

They said that after a 15-minute conversation the two premiers were still on course for a meeting in London before Christmas to try to end one of the world's most protracted guerrilla conflicts.

"Everything is on plan," one official said. He stressed that the two leaders were making "good progress rather than progress."

Mr. Major and Mr. Reynolds are searching for a form of words that encourages Irish Republican Army guerril-

las to lay down their arms in a campaign to end British rule in Northern Ireland but also reassure the province's Protestant majority, which fervently wants to stay part of Britain.

Mr. Major sounded gloomy Monday about the chances of agreeing on a peace formula.

But officials Tuesday were more optimistic, suggesting that the British prime minister could make a statement to parliament before it adjourns Friday for the Christmas holidays.

Mr. Major, who conferred Tuesday morning with Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd and junior Northern Ireland Minister Michael Ancram, may speak again with Mr. Reynolds before setting a date for a summit, the officials said.

Bosnian Muslims attack Croat-held area

SARAJEVO (R) — Bosnian government troops were reported to have launched a fierce attack on Croat-held territory Tuesday with a barrage of artillery, tank and mortar fire that sent people fleeing to shelters.

Croatian Radio said special units of the 3rd Corps of the Muslim-led government army, including some foreign "mujahideen" holy warriors, fired more than 100 shells at the Zepce area in central Bosnia.

The radio said Zepce town and nearby villages were attacked from Muslim strongholds near Zeljezno Polje and Golubnje, sending residents diving for shelters.

The report, which could not be immediately confirmed, gave no details of casualties. However, the radio said units of the Bosnian Croat Army (HVO) were holding their positions, and returning fire.

In Serb-besieged Sarajevo the United Nations announced that the airport, which is under its control, was closed because of fighting in the area which erupted in mid-morning Tuesday after a relatively quiet night.

To the east of the Bosnian capital Serbs were reported by government-controlled Sarajevo Radio to have attacked two Muslim enclaves that are supposed to be U.N. "safe areas".

The radio said four people had been killed and two wounded over the past few days in artillery attacks on Gorazde, south-east of Sarajevo, and five people were wounded by shelling in Srebrenica, north-east of the capital.

U.N. peacekeepers in Sarajevo said they would try to get an aid convoy into Gorazde Tuesday. Two convoys gave up and turned around Saturday after local Serbs refused to allow U.N. military escort vehicles to leave the city.

But the long-running problem of U.N. escorts appeared to have been solved when a spokesman for the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) announced Tuesday it had agreed to let Bosnian Serb police escort aid convoys through Serb-held areas.

Brigadier Angus Ramsay, chief of staff on UNPROFOR operations in Bosnia, and General Manojlo Milovanovic, Bosnian Serb army chief of staff, met Monday and reached an understanding on escorting convoys, a UNPROFOR spokesman said.

The United Nations has complained repeatedly about delays to aid convoys caused by Bosnian Serbs and by Serbia itself. It has accused them of using both military force and bureaucracy to prevent aid getting through to Bosnian Muslims.

UNPROFOR spokesman Idesbald Van Biesebeek said the two officers did not sign any agreement but came to a verbal understanding.

"We have agreed that provision of fuel for the police escorts should be given for each convoy," Van Biesebeek, a Belgian, said. But he denied this meant UNPROFOR was lifting last week's restriction on providing fuel for road maintenance to the Serbs.

He said Mr. Zhirinovsky's bloc will not claim even 20 per cent of the parliament seats and various reform groups could together account for 40 per cent, leaving the rest up for woe by Mr. Yeltsin and his allies.

Mr. Balzer stressed that under the new constitution Mr. Yeltsin still appoints the government, has considerable control over the political agenda and could, in event of a stalemate six months from now, dissolve parliament and call new elections.

But Gabriel Schoenfeld of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies called the poll results a "potential disaster... A very strong protest against the direction of economic reform."

"It does seem that Russia could unravel now," Mr. Schoenfeld said in an interview. He added that the results have greatly narrowed the options for economic policy, even though Mr. Yeltsin and other members of his government have vowed to proceed with reforms.

6 lost Haydn sonatas found

LONDON (R) — Six lost piano sonatas written by the 18th century composer Joseph Haydn have been found in Germany, the Times of London reported Tuesday. The paper said an elderly woman in Munster showed the manuscript, which she had owned for some time without realising their importance, to a local music teacher. The Times said Haydn experts had authenticated the manuscript, it said after the discovery was announced in London Tuesday by Professor H.C. Robbins Landon, the leading Haydn biographer, the sheets will be auctioned at a date yet to be decided. Scholars have long known that sonatas dating from the middle of Haydn's life, probably from 1766-1769, were missing, because the composer had compiled a catalogue that listed the first few bars of each piece. The newly discovered manuscript is not in Haydn's hand and was a later copy, made in Italy and dating from about 1805. But the Times said musicologists were convinced they were the missing sonatas. They are believed to have been among the first sonatas written by Haydn specifically for the Fortepiano, a forerunner of the modern piano, and are also crucial as they came at a time when he was trying to express the turbulent sentiments of the " Sturm und Drang" (Storm and Stress) literary movement. The Austrian pianist Paul Badura-Skoda is to give the first modern performance of the sonatas at Harvard University on Feb. 12. They will be published in April.

The report, which could not be immediately confirmed, gave no details of casualties. However, the radio said units of the Bosnian Croat Army (HVO) were holding their positions, and returning fire.

In Serb-besieged Sarajevo the United Nations announced that the airport, which is under its control, was closed because of fighting in the area which erupted in mid-morning Tuesday after a relatively quiet night.

To the east of the Bosnian capital Serbs were reported by government-controlled Sarajevo Radio to have attacked two Muslim enclaves that are supposed to be U.N. "safe areas".

The radio said four people had been killed and two wounded over the past few days in artillery attacks on Gorazde, south-east of Sarajevo, and five people were wounded by shelling in Srebrenica, north-east of the capital.

U.N. peacekeepers in Sarajevo said they would try to get an aid convoy into Gorazde Tuesday. Two convoys gave up and turned around Saturday after local Serbs refused to allow U.N. military escort vehicles to leave the city.

But the long-running problem of U.N. escorts appeared to have been solved when a spokesman for the U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) announced Tuesday it had agreed to let Bosnian Serb police escort aid convoys through Serb-held areas.

Brigadier Angus Ramsay, chief of staff on UNPROFOR operations in Bosnia, and General Manojlo Milovanovic, Bosnian Serb army chief of staff, met Monday and reached an understanding on escorting convoys, a UNPROFOR spokesman said.

The United Nations has complained repeatedly about delays to aid convoys caused by Bosnian Serbs and by Serbia itself. It has accused them of using both military force and bureaucracy to prevent aid getting through to Bosnian Muslims.

UNPROFOR spokesman Idesbald Van Biesebeek said the two officers did not sign any agreement but came to a verbal understanding.

"We have agreed that provision of fuel for the police escorts should be given for each convoy," Van Biesebeek, a Belgian, said. But he denied this meant UNPROFOR was lifting last week's restriction on providing fuel for road maintenance to the Serbs.

He said Mr. Zhirinovsky's bloc will not claim even 20 per cent of the parliament seats and various reform groups could together account for 40 per cent, leaving the rest up for woe by Mr. Yeltsin and his allies.

Mr. Balzer stressed that under the new constitution Mr. Yeltsin still appoints the government, has considerable control over the political agenda and could, in event of a stalemate six months from now, dissolve parliament and call new elections.

But Gabriel Schoenfeld of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies called the poll results a "potential disaster... A very strong protest against the direction of economic reform."

"It does seem that Russia could unravel now," Mr. Schoenfeld said in an interview. He added that the results have greatly narrowed the options for economic policy, even though Mr. Yeltsin and other members of his government have vowed to proceed with reforms.

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Burma drugs warlord declares independence

BANGKOK (R) — Golden Triangle opium warlord Khun Sa has declared an independent state for Burma's Shan ethnic minority with himself as president and written to U.S. President Bill Clinton asking for help to eradicate drugs.

Khun Sa, who is half Shan and half ethnic Chinese, told reporters the independent state of Shan had been proclaimed by a local parliament over the weekend.

Senior Shan rebels criticised Khun Sa's action, saying an indicted drug trafficker had no right to lead the Shan minority, which has been fighting for autonomy from Rangoon virtually since British colonial rule ended in 1948.

"It is a phony idea. He doesn't represent the Shan people at all. No Tai (Shan) people support him. We feel quite ashamed to have his organisation around," a senior rebel official told Reuters by telephone.

"He is a drug dealer, not a freedom fighter as he claims," Khun Sa's Shan State Restoration Council on the Thai-Burma border set up a parliament to govern the new state before new year celebrations this week, to which reporters and exiled ethnic Shans were invited from all over the region.

Khun Sa is the dominant leader in the poppy-growing area at the juncture of Laos, Thailand and Burma known as the Golden Triangle, which produces 70 per cent of the world's opium according to U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) estimates.

Wanted in the United States on charges of heroin trafficking, he admits opium is grown in his area but says he only taxes it just like any other commodity. Heroin is made from opium.

In his letter to Mr. Clinton — the latest of several he has sent to U.S. leaders on the drugs issue — Khun Sa said the international community must help the Shan people find an alternative livelihood to opium-growing.

He said the people in his area would destroy their opium crops if the international community could force Rangoon to withdraw from the ethnically and politically divided state in northeastern Burma.

For now, they only wanted assistance in the form of rice, salt, cooking oil and medical care, he said in the letter, excerpts of which were published in the Bangkok Post Tuesday.

In the medium term, they needed help to "build roads and other means of communications, and to give them the necessary assistance in their substitution programmes," the letter said.

Seoul: Northern attack can be repelled

SEOUL (R) — President Kim Young-Sam said Tuesday that South Korea and the United States would be able to repel any attack from North Korea.

"South Korea and the United States are doing their best to stop North Korea's nuclear development, but if it works to their disadvantage, North Korea is capable of provoking a strike," Mr. Kim said during a visit to an army camp in Seoul.

"But forces of South Korea and the United States are capable of repelling the attack," South Korea and its Western allies fear the Stalinist North is building a nuclear bomb, a charge, Pyongyang denies.

Some recent news reports from Washington have said the North would be able to launch a quick, massive strike across the demilitarised zone dividing North and South.

South Korea said such reports were creating concern.

The recent report by the Washington Post of dangers in

the peninsula is making South Korean citizens nervous and worried," a Defence Ministry statement on Tuesday said.

The Washington Post said Sunday the U.S. diplomatic campaign to thwart North Korea's nuclear programme had been driven by an overriding fear that even a non-nuclear skirmish on the Korean peninsula would be catastrophic.

The Defence Ministry statement said North Korea would probably solve the nuclear issue by peaceful means as "there would be no winners or losers should a war on the peninsula break out... The most important thing is to stop a recurrence of war on the peninsula."

The Washington Post said any second Korean war would result in tens or hundreds of thousands of casualties as well as wreaking wide-ranging economic havoc.

South and North Korea have remained technically at war since the end of the 1950-53

Korean War.

Meanwhile, North Korea, apparently trying to improve ties with Washington, Tuesday returned what it said were the remains of 33 U.S. soldiers killed in the 1950-53 Korean War, including some with identification cards.

The handover at the border village of Panmunjom is the third of its kind in less than two months and signals Pyongyang's desire to ease mounting tension over its suspected development of nuclear weapons.

U.S. Colonel Forrest Chilton, secretary of the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) of the United Nations Command (UNC) stationed in South Korea, accepted the remains which will be moved to the U.S. Army Identification Laboratory in Hawaii.

Some sets of remains were sent back with ID cards showing names, dates of birth and fingerprints. One also carried what appeared to be a photo of family members.

China, Britain head for clash over Hong Kong

HONG KONG (AFP) — China and Britain are heading for direct confrontation, as Governor Chris Patten submits his controversial electoral reform bill to the legislative council for debate Wednesday despite Beijing's objection.

Chinese sources close to the Xinhua News Agency, China's de facto government representative in the territory, said direct confrontation was "unavoidable."

Mr. Patten expects the Legislative Council to pass his electoral reform package by March as Britain prepares to return the colony to China in 1997.

"China will have to watch every measure taken by Britain in the territory," a Chinese source said.

"Any measures that will affect the territory's smooth

transition will be met with a tit for tat in order to avert any possible turmoil that may break out during the transition," the source said.

Lee Wai-Ting, Xinhua Hong Kong branch director's assistant, said: "China will not just sit on one side and allow chaos to happen in Hong Kong."

Mr. Patten decided two weeks ago to present the partial package of reforms in a bid to buy time for more negotiations on thornier issues after 17 rounds of Sino-British negotiations since April collapsed.

The reforms to be tabled Wednesday would lower the minimum voting age from 21 to 18, as it is in China, abolish appointed local government seats, and enshrine the principle of single-seat geographic constituencies.

Woerner urges France to participate fully in NATO

PARIS (R) — NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner appealed to France Tuesday to participate fully in the Atlantic alliance even if it did not put its forces under NATO military command.

Speaking at a Paris conference less than a month before a key NATO summit, Mr. Woerner said the French defence minister and chief of staff should attend alliance meetings and France should share in NATO's planned combined joint task forces, which may also operate under Western European Union (WEU) command.

France is completing a defence review which officials say should lead to the defence minister attending some NATO meetings for the first

time since 1966, without going back on the late President Charles de Gaulle's decision to withdraw French troops from the U.S.-dominated military command.

Mr. Woerner said the other 15 allies realised France would not return fully to the NATO military command and Paris realised the alliance would not abolish its integrated military structure.

"So we should avoid wasting our time debating unrealistic and, for the most part, purely theoretical scenarios. We would do better to practice the art of the possible," he said.

Mr. Woerner said NATO had made fundamental changes and France could play a full role in influencing further changes.

57 killed in Congo clashes

BRAZZAVILLE (R) — At least 57 people were killed in a fresh wave of violence between government and opposition supporters in Congo's capital Brazzaville, hospital sources said Tuesday.

Violence broke out Friday in the city's southern districts. Residents who fled the fighting said presidential movement supporters were taking revenge against the opposition for clashes last month in which at least 43 people were killed.

"It's hard for people to go through these changes and not have a certain percentage of them vote for candidates who articulate protests most forcefully," Mr. Clinton said.

It was his first comment on the surge of support in Sunday's parliamentary elections for Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who advocates restoration of a Russian empire on the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Mr. Zhirinovsky's success was a blow to President Yeltsin's reform backers and sent shockwaves through Russian political circles where critics regard Mr. Zhirinovsky as a fascist.

Mr. Clinton said he planned "no change in my policy in

Clinton is 'not surprised' by Russian poll trend

WASHINGTON (R) — President Bill Clinton said Monday he was pleased at Russia's adoption of a new constitution and was not surprised by the strong showing of ultra-nationalists opposed to Boris Yeltsin's reforms.

"I'm not particularly surprised by the showing of the ultra-nationalist party because the Russian people have suffered a lot in the last few years," Mr. Clinton said at a news conference during a trip to Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, a Philadelphia suburb.

"It's hard for people to go through these changes and not have a certain percentage of them vote for candidates who articulate protests most forcefully," Mr. Clinton said.

It was his first comment on the surge of support in Sunday's parliamentary elections for Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who advocates restoration of a Russian empire on the territory of the former Soviet Union.

Mr. Zhirinovsky's success was a blow to President Yeltsin's reform backers and sent shockwaves through Russian political circles where critics regard Mr. Zhirinovsky as a fascist.

Mr. Clinton said he planned "no change in my policy in

general terms toward Russia."

He was "very pleased" at the approval of a constitution establishing democracy and a strong presidency.

"This now lays a foundation for a long-term legitimacy for democracy and for expression of popular rule that will not be just solely dependent upon the occasional elections for president," the president said.

He was expected to look for pointers to the developments in Russia from Vice President Al Gore, who arrived in Moscow Tuesday to meet senior officials.

Administration officials said the poll showed no major irregularities and certified the move toward democracy that Washington and its allies have sought to promote.

But they admitted the parliamentary results were troubling and some experts went further, envisioning potentially disastrous consequences for Mr. Yeltsin's economic reforms and cooperation with the West.

The administration, which has invested considerable capital in Mr. Yeltsin and his reform cause, sought to play down the fact that early returns showed many virulent anti-

Yeltsin candidates will be members of the new parliament.

"I don't think we know enough at this point to establish a trend," State Department spokesman Mike McCurry said.

He said what was important was the strength of the legislative core that will direct the nation's political life.

"We don't, at this point, know a lot about how this new parliament will function, what its political ideology will trend towards, nor how the different institution developing within Russia's democracy will interact," he said.

U.S. Ambassador to Russia Thomas Pickering said the voters had given Mr. Yeltsin a "legal basis to move ahead" by approving the constitution but he said Mr. Zhirinovsky may be a long-term disruptive influence to Mr. Yeltsin.

Harley Balzer, director of the Russian Studies Programme of Georgetown University, shared the administration's caution.

"The bottom line is, 'don't get carried away,'" Mr. Balzer told Reuters. "The situation is

NEWS IN BRIEF

Prince urges detailed recruitment plan

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Ibn Al Hussein, chairman of the Jordan Soccer Federation (JSF), has underlined the need for a comprehensive and detailed plan to recruit and train Jordanian national football teams. Speaking at a federation council meeting Monday evening, Prince Abdullah said the projected plan should take into consideration various aspects that would ensure the sustainability of these national teams and guarantee their high standard. To achieve this goal, the plan ought to provide for financial resources to cover various costs incurred in the course of recruitment and training, the Prince said. Prince Abdullah praised the idea of regular meetings by football clubs in various governorates with the purpose of stimulating sports activities in their respective regions.

Hurley in horror car crash

SACRAMENTO, California (AFP) — Sacramento Kings star Bobby Hurley has been badly hurt in a car crash. The 22-year-old basketball player suffered multiple injuries in the accident Sunday after being thrown from his car after a collision, one hour after his side's defeat against the Los Angeles Clippers. Club spokesman Travis Stanley said Hurley suffered head, neck, back and lung injuries. He also broke several ribs.

Baggio tops world soccer poll

LONDON (AP) — Italian striker Roberto Baggio has edged Dutch stars Dennis Bergkamp and Raul Gullit as world soccer's player of the year, according to voting by readers of the prestigious British magazine. Baggio, whose goals helped Juventus triumph in last season's UEFA Cup, polled 13.5 per cent of the votes. Inter Milan's Bergkamp was runner up for the second year in a row with 11 per cent and Sampdoria's Gullit, who won the award in 1987 and 1989, was third with 9 per cent. Brazilian star Romario, who plays in Spain for Barcelona, placed fourth and Colombia's Faustino Asprilla, who plays for Italy's Parma, was fifth. Parma, winner of the Cup Winners Cup, placed first in the team voting ahead of Colombia and Manchester United and United's Alex Ferguson was named Manager of the Year ahead of Parma's Nevio Scala and Egil Olsen of Norway. Olympique Marseille, who won the Champions Cup but then was hit by allegations of bribery, did not figure in the top 10 clubs and had no player in the top 20.

Aouita named Morocco athletics chief

RABAT (AFP) — Former world and Olympic 5,000m champion said Aouita was named technical director of the Moroccan Athletics Federation. Aouita takes over from Mohammed Mediouni, chief of security to King Hassan II, and his assistant is Nawal Moutawakil, the women's 400m hurdles champion at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. After his post was confirmed, Aouita expressed his wish to boost the image of Moroccan athletics. Aouita was Olympic 5,000m champion in Los Angeles in 1984 and world champion in Rome in 1987. He was unbeaten over 5,000m from 1979 to 1989, and broke world records from 1,500m to 5,000m.

Fashanu wanted by Nigeria

LONDON (AFP) — John Fashanu, the former England striker in trouble with the Football Association for elbowing Tottenham defender Gary Mabbutt, is being lined up by Nigeria for next year's World Cup finals. Nigerian FA Chairman Chief Akinwunmi told the People newspaper that he plans to visit England Wednesday to speak to the Wimbledon captain after being given the go-ahead by FIFA, football's governing body. "We'll definitely consider him," said Chief Akinwunmi of the 30-year-old Fashanu, who was born in London, but has a Nigerian father. Although Fashanu was capped twice by England against Chile and Scotland four years ago, those games were friendlies and do not count as regards eligibility any more. A FIFA spokeswoman told the British tabloid: "Our new circular states that players who are eligible for more than one country make a choice when they play in a competitive tournament. But, as far as we're concerned, Fashanu is still eligible for England and Nigeria."

Robson replacement debuts with win

LISBON, Portugal (AP) — Sporting's new coach Carlos Queiroz debuted in style, guiding his team to a 1-0 victory against Beira Mar to finish out the twelfth round of Portuguese first division soccer. It was Sporting's first appearance under Queiroz, who replaced former England manager Bobby Robson last week. Robson was dismissed by Sporting President Jose Sousa Cintra after tactical errors led to a costly 3-0 upset by Austria's Salzburg in UEFA Cup play. Sousa Cintra's decision marked the first time in Robson's 23-year coaching career that he had been fired. Sporting played unevenly on the rain-soaked home pitch in the first minutes, then gathered composure. Top striker Jorge Cadete Snuck past Beira Mar's Brazilian keeper Acacio Barreto in the 44th minute and blasted the team's only goal from one metre out. The victory pulled Sporting up into first place, tied at 19 points with cross-town rivals Benfica. Benfica won an easy 1-0 victory Friday, against low-ranked Amadora.

St. Anton to stage downhill race

VIENNA (R) — The town council in St. Anton have stepped in with financial help to enable a women's World Cup downhill race to go ahead in the Austrian resort Friday, organisers said Tuesday. The race, moved from Veysonnaz in Switzerland because of warm weather there, had been called off Monday when organisers said they were unable to find a sponsor. But on Tuesday they said the town council in St. Anton, which had already been scheduled to host two other women's races Saturday and Sunday, had now agreed to finance the extra event. "The downhill race will be held in St. Anton Friday before the originally scheduled combination downhill and slalom events at the weekend," a member of the organising committee said.

Christie shelves retirement plans

LONDON (AFP) — World champion Linford Christie looks set for a U-turn over his retirement plans after hinting he could defend his Olympic title in Atlanta in 1996. "Keep your pens ready — I'm not counting out the Atlanta games at all," said Christie, who is already the oldest man ever to win Olympic gold. "I'd be 36 by then, but every year I seem to get better and I don't think I'm anywhere near the pinnacle of my career yet. Whatever I do, I'll make sure I go out at the top." Christie, who predicted next season would be his last after winning in Stuttgart, said his immediate target was a double at European Championships and Commonwealth Games next year, adding: "Retirement isn't on my mind at the moment. The only thing that will be on my mind next year is winning those two titles." Christie also believes he can still break Carl Lewis' world record of 9.86secs.

Yorath may stay as Wales manager

CARDIFF, Wales (AFP) — The Welsh Football Association looks set to extend Terry Yorath's reign as coach of the national side, despite speculation linking Terry Venables with the job. Ex-Spurs boss Venables was tipped as Yorath's successor after contract talks stalled last week. But FA Secretary Alan Evans denied any contact with Venables and said talks with Yorath would resume Wednesday. "We will offer what we think we can afford and hopefully we will be able to announce Thursday morning that Terry Yorath is continuing as team manager," he said. "It will solve a lot of problems and end speculation about a new man." Yorath said: "We had talks and now I'm waiting to hear from them. We are not that far apart. I want to stay as manager of Wales, providing terms can be reached."

Robson ready for Everton job

LIVERPOOL (AFP) — Former England manager Bobby Robson could take over as Everton's new manager. Robson, who parted company with Sporting Lisbon last week is one of the favourites to take over from Howard Kendall, who quit nine days ago. Former Everton player and Manchester City manager Peter Reid, Oldham manager Job Royle and Bolton boss Bruce Rioch are also expected to be interviewed by the Everton board.

Norwich spike Leeds title challenge of Manchester United

NORWICH, England (AFP) — Never-say-die Norwich striker Efan Ekoku bounced back from a horror performance to spike Leeds' title challenge here Monday — and all but hand the title to Manchester United.

Leeds, 13 points behind the leaders, desperately needed a win to maintain their challenge. But Ekoku missed a stream of chances before stealing the game 2-1 at the second attempt after another miss fell straight back into his path.

Norwich's other hero was Scottish international goalkeeper Brian Gunn, who looked unbeatable until Rodney Wallace's neat second-half equaliser, his eighth goal in eight games.

Norwich, after going into the break 1-0 up through Chris Sutton, battled desperately to stay in the game as Leeds took control of the rain-lashed second half.

But Ekoku used his pace to latch onto a Sutton flick on to the goal.

He found his feet, however, to slot home the rebound off goalkeeper Mark Begney.

Ekoku said: "I just had to keep on plugging away and hope I got another chance."

It was my first league goal at Carrow Road — I didn't get a good contact by I managed to stick the second chance away."

Leeds were left stunned by the defeat after totally dominating the second half.

Wallace seemed to have set up their victory charge in the 67th minute when he cut inside from the right and fooled Gunn by sliding a shot through a rack of players and into the bottom right corner.

That was Gunn's only lapse, however, and he was at his best moments before when pulling off a double save, first blocking a Tony Dorigo free-kick low down to his left and then turning

ing Brian Deane's follow-up onto the post.

Gunn said: "It was important for me to get a touch to Deane's shot — I just threw my fourteen-and-a-half frame at the ball."

Wallace saw another effort blocked on the line by Colin Woodthorpe with 20 minutes to go — and even after Ekoku's clincher, there was time for Leeds to waste two more good openings, Wallace dragging a shot wide and Gunn punching another Dorigo drive.

Yet the opening period had belonged to the Canaries — although Ekoku did his best to try and hide that fact.

He and attacking partner Sutton provided a huge contrast, Sutton looking dangerous with every touch while Ekoku continued to blunder.

First he was put clear in the 11th minute but, with only Beene to beat, managed to let

the keeper snatch the ball off his toes.

Sutton set him up again ten minutes before the break, deftly laying off a right-wing centre from ruel Fox right into his path but Ekoku, this time sliced his shot wide of the left post.

Leeds' best early chance came from a swerving 25-yard shot from left back Dorigo which was turned round the left post and seconds later influential Leeds playmaker Gary McAllister threaded a low shot just past the right upright.

But Sutton gave Ekoku his crucial scoring lesson with a minute of the first half remaining. A brilliant through ball from Dave Smith was cut back by Welsh international Mark Bowen and Sutton calmly shot home off the right-hand post.

Leeds did put the ball into the Norwich net seconds later but the effort was cancelled out by a Wallace handball.

German clubs kept apart in UEFA Cup draw

GENEVA (R) — The three German clubs were kept apart when the draw for the quarterfinals of the UEFA Cup was made Tuesday.

But Italy, also with three representatives, did not avoid a domestic derby as holders Juventus were drawn to play Cagliari.

Borussia Dortmund, the team Juventus beat to win last season's final, ended up with the toughest task when they were matched with Internazionale of Milan.

The other German clubs fared better by being drawn against the outsiders in the last eight.

Eintracht Frankfurt were paired with Austria Salzburg

and Karlsruhe, playing for the first time in Europe this season, with Boavista of Portugal.

First leg matches will be played on March 2 or 3 and second leg fixtures are on March 16 and 17.

Roberto Baggio's Juventus, clear favourites for a second successive title, were by no means disappointed with their draw, especially as the first leg will be played in Sardinia.

Their main rivals may well prove to be Internazionale, who are likely to improve steadily through the season as Dutch striker Dennis Bergkamp settles in.

The Milan side were originally drawn to play their first leg with Borussia Dortmund at

home but a clash with AC Milan's European Cup Champions' League game against Werder Bremen prompted UEFA to switch the order.

So Dortmund, whose form has dropped this season, must play the first leg at home.

After leading the German League for most of the first half of the season, Eintracht Frankfurt have plunged into a spiral of reverses.

But their tie with Austria Salzburg looks none too threatening and the 1980 UEFA Cup winners may be relishing the prospects of a semifinal place.

Karlsruhe President Roland Schmider accurately predicted

in advance that his team would play Boavista of Portugal.

"It's a good draw for us but I wouldn't say our chances are any better than 50-50," he said. "It's our first time in Europe and we're just happy to be in the draw for the fourth time."

Schmider started the day badly when his wallet was stolen but he looked happier after UEFA reversed the order of matches so that Karlsruhe play the first leg away.

The switch was made to avoid Boavista playing the second leg at home which would have clashed with Porto's Champions' League game against Anderlecht of Belgium.

Witt plans classical programme at German meet

BONN (R) — Despite a disastrous start to her comeback, Katarina Witt will try to give high-jumping teenagers a lesson in classic figure-skating at the German Championships this week.

The glamorous queen of German figure-skating is returning to competition after a six-year absence at the championships in Herne near Bochum from Thursday to Saturday.

Witt, whose strength was never in jumping, will emphasise the subtle artistry that won her two Olympic, four world and six European titles for East Germany in the 1980s.

She is up against today's prodigious female figure-skaters who show off with seven triple jumps in the free programme, spending almost more

time in the air than on the ice. "The generation is getting very young," Witt told reporters earlier this month. "They are 15, 16 and they are awesome. They are doing technically great jumps."

"But... this is figure skating. It is not just all about jumping. There should be a chance for a different generation. I think we can do something else, show maturity and more sophistication on the ice."

Witt's new routine is accompanied by the melancholy music of the anti-war melody Where Have All Flowers Gone? — a tribute to war ravaged Sarajevo where she won her first Olympic gold in 1984.

But Witt, who is bidding for a place in the German team at February's Lillehammer Win-

ter Olympics, had a dramatic fall as she unveiled her free programme in Frankfurt on Dec. 3 — her 28th birthday.

She tried a triple toe-loop in her first jump but slipped and later blamed the lacklustre performance on nerves.

"Only triples count in competition," said Elfriede Beyer, a German judge who will be in Herne. "If the jumps are not there then the programme is not worth anything."

Experts would not write off Witt, saying she was a fighter who could win a top-three placing — enough to qualify for the European Championships in Copenhagen next month and keep alive her Olympic hopes.

Witt said after the Frankfurt fiasco that her goal was to make the Olympic team, not to win gold.

"Of course the triples are important and they have to be part of it and I am going to do triples as well. But I am not doing seven triples because I feel four triples are enough for me and for my programme," she said.

Witt, helped by her old

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DOUBLE WHAMMY

Both vulnerable, North deals.
NORTH
♠ K J 8 3
♥ Q 7 5 4
♦ 6
♣ A K 6 3
WEST
♠ Q 6 5
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SOUTH
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♥ K 10 9 2
♦ Q J 10 9 2
♣ J

The bidding:
North East South West
1 ♠ 1 ♣ 1 NT Pass
Pass Pass
Opening lead?

The American Contract Bridge League has selected New York's Edgar Kaplan as its Honorary Member for 1993 — a most felicitous choice. For more than four decades Kaplan has contributed significantly to the game as theorist, teacher, player and laws expert. His partnership with Norman Kay of Philadelphia is among the most successful in the history of the game. If there is one problem with Kaplan, it's getting him to remember a good hand for a column. When you ask, the stock reply is: "I didn't do anything special. Try Norman!"

Kaplan-Kay sat East-West on this deal from the Vanderbilt Team Championship a few years ago. As West, Kay was faced with two problems. First, Norman had to decide whether or not to bid at the two-level in the suit the opponents had opened — Kaplan-Kay play that a two-club bid here would have been natural. That contract would have been made, probably with an over-trick. After he elected to pass, the next barrier was to justify that decision.

It hurt Norman not to be able to lead partner's suit — even with a void he feels it is a breach of trust. The obvious choice was a club and we hazard a guess that 99.9 percent of defenders would make the "fast-book" lead of the ten, top of an interior sequence. That would not only have presented declarer with an extra trick by winning the jack, but also the timing to make at least seven tricks. Kay hit on the killing lead of the queen of clubs, smothering the jack.

Declarer could have limited the loss to down two by going after hearts, immediately. However, South hoped that West held only one fast entry and played on diamonds instead. The result was a very handsome 300 points to East-West.

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Saddam frees French and German detainees

BAGHDAD (AFP) — President Saddam Hussein ordered the release Tuesday of the last two Westerners held for illegal entry into Iraq, officials and a lawyer said.

Frenchman Jean-Luc Barriere, who was arrested on the Kuwait-Iraqi border in June and sentenced to eight years, said at a news conference in Baghdad's Al Rashid Hotel that he was "happy" to be free.

"I would like first of all to express my gratitude to President Saddam Hussein and thank the prison authorities for the facilities they provided on several occasions," said Mr. Barriere, who smiled and looked relaxed.

Lawyer Khaled Guirguis, who has represented Westerners held in Iraq, said President Saddam had pardoned a German, Kai Sondermann, who was also jailed for eight years after being arrested at the disputed border in May.

Word of Mr. Sondermann's release first came from the German embassy in Amman. The Iraqi News Agency said President Saddam had ordered the release of foreign prisoners for "humanitarian reasons after threats failed to shake Iraq's firm resolve."

The president freed three Britons last week who were serving sentences of up to 10 years for illegal entry after a mercy mission by former Prime Minister Edward Heath.

President Saddam pardoned the Frenchman after a senior French official, Serge Boidevaux, and a parliamentary delegation arrived on missions to

win Mr. Barriere's release.

Mr. Barriere, a Kuwait-based technician with the company France-Electronique, was arrested on June 18 with a Moroccan, Ali Othout, who was freed in October.

Mr. Boidevaux, a former secretary general of the French foreign ministry and a member of France's top administrative review body, the state council, met Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz and Foreign Minister, Mohammad Saeed Al Sahaf.

In Amman, the German embassy said Mr. Aziz also met a German delegation on Tuesday and informed them of Mr. Sondermann's pending release.

Mr. Sondermann, accompanied by a delegation which was headed by a former German minister, Hans-Juergen Wischniewski of the opposition Social Democrats, was expected in Amman on Wednesday.

He worked for a German telecommunications firm and was arrested around the border port of Umm Qasr along with Simon Dunn, one of the Britons freed last week.

Iraq released three Swedes in September, a Filipino in October and an American in November, all of whom had been jailed for illegal entry. However, an unknown number of Asians are still held in Iraq for the same offence.

The releases come as Iraq tries to break out of international isolation dating from its invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

Israel, Vatican plan ties by year's end

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel and the Vatican expect to establish diplomatic ties by the end of the year, a big step in improving relations between Jews and Catholics after a long history of friction, Israel's ambassador in Rome said on Tuesday.

"We believe that in the soonest possible time we will be closing the agreement with the Vatican, signing it in Jerusalem and forging diplomatic relations," Ambassador Avi Pazner told Israeli army radio.

"There's almost no doubt we'll finish this matter by the end of the year," he told the radio by telephone.

"Only the smallest and final details remain to seal the agreement, details that in my opinion pose no problem," Mr. Pazner said. The Vatican said on Monday a joint commission set up to establish diplomatic relations had almost completed its work.

The agreement, following two years of secret negotiations, is expected to clear the way for a visit by Pope John Paul II. The last papal visit to the Holy Land was 30 years ago.

Asked if the Pope would make the trip, Mr. Pazner said: "It's clear that after the establishment of diplomatic relations, it will be easier and more natural. But at the moment there is no date."

Diplomatic sources close to the negotiations said last month the agreement would most likely be signed to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the late Pope Paul VI's Jan. 4-7, 1964, visit to the Holy

Land. Jewish-Catholic relations were revolutionised in the 1965 "Nostra Aetate" (in our times), a major second Vatican council document that urged dialogue with Jews and repudiated the idea of collective Jewish guilt for Christ's death 2,000 years ago.

But relations remained chilly because of the Vatican's refusal to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

A joint Israeli-Vatican commission was set up in 1992 and negotiations moved more rapidly than expected after Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) signed a peace accord in September on Palestinian self-rule.

The commission reached fundamental agreement on 14 points including the legal status of the church, religious tourism, taxation and a joint stand against anti-Semitism.

Issues such as international guarantees for Jerusalem and the Palestinian issue were left to Middle East peace talks. The Vatican, which supports a Palestinian homeland, has always recognised Israel's right to exist within secure borders.

Sources have said the Pope and Israeli President Ezer Weizman will most likely exchange personal representatives before the formal appointment of ambassadors.

This will allow time to iron out the church's tax status in the Holy Land and give the Israeli parliament time to ratify the agreement.

Yassin: Hamas may take part in elections

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The jailed founder of the Islamic group Hamas said the group might go for the ballot as well as the bullet to show its strength in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, contradicting Hamas officials outside the occupied territories, said in a rare interview that the group could take part in elections next July for an assembly to run Palestinian self-government.

The assembly is part of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) agreement, which Hamas opposes.

Sheikh Yassin said Hamas would continue to attack Israeli soldiers and Jewish settlers as long as they occupied "Palestine" but he said he did not approve of killing the elderly, women and children.

Sheikh Yassin was answering written questions carried through an intermediary. He is serving a life sentence plus 15 years for ordering the killing of Israelis and Arabs suspected of collaborating with Israel.

Hamas, which Sheikh Yassin founded, is the biggest rival to Yasser Arafat's Fatah wing of the PLO in the territories. It said it has killed at least 11 Israelis since the peace agreement was signed in September.

Asked if Hamas would run in elections, the wheelchair-bound Yassin replied: "I believe that it depends on the aim of the elections and their conditions and circumstances. If there were legislative elections, for example, I would support taking part because of the impact they would have on the Islamic movement in the future."

Sheikh Yassin, who set up Hamas (zeal) in Gaza in 1988, said it was the largest movement in the occupied territories, commanding support from between 40 and 50 per cent of Palestinians.

By keeping the election open Sheikh Yassin is putting pressure on Mr. Arafat to show an increasingly sceptical Palestinian public that the agreement with Israel can improve their lives and end the occupation.

Sheikh Yassin said that where Hamas had run, such as in university or chamber of commerce elections, it had won.

Palestinian political commentators think that by exploiting discontent with the PLO-Israel accord Hamas could do well in free elections for an executive council next July.

For that reason some commentators believe Mr. Arafat may postpone the election, arguing that Israel and the PLO should leapfrog difficult negotiations about interim self-rule and begin talks on the final status on the occupied lands.

The accord is already looking shaky. Both sides failed on Monday to meet their first deadline — the start of a four-month-long troop withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho.

As part of Israel's pressure on Mr. Arafat to gain concessions, Israeli officials disclosed on Monday that they had been meeting members of Hamas, which is outlawed.

Japan and Holland announce assistance

TOKYO (Agencies) — Japan will provide \$25 million in emergency aid to help improve Palestinian living conditions, the Foreign Ministry said Tuesday.

The aid is the first part of a \$200 million package Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa pledged in September in New York at the U.N. General Assembly to Palestinians, ministry officials said.

The assistance includes \$16.5 million for the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees to help improve living conditions and construct temporary housing, the ministry said.

A further \$5.4 million has been earmarked for the World Health Organisation to improve medical facilities in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, with \$60 million yen (\$2.8 million) being sent through the Japan Red Cross Society to provide equipment for a hospital in the West Bank town of Jericho.

The aid was announced on the eve of a two-day international meeting here to discuss the Middle East peace process.

The fourth multilateral steering group meeting of the Middle East peace process began Wednesday and will be chaired by the United States and Russia.

Eleven delegations headed by deputy minister-level officials are expected to attend the meeting to discuss the future management of the Middle East peace process, according to the Foreign Ministry.

Dutch to provide \$34m
The Dutch government said

on Monday it would provide 65 million guilders (\$34 million) in aid and soft loans for development of the Palestinian territories in Gaza and Jericho.

The harbour (planned for Gaza) would cost 100 million guilders (\$52 million) and the Dutch government will provide 40 million (\$21 million), an economics ministry spokesman told Reuters in the Hague.

The spokesman said another 25 million guilders (\$13 million) would be offered for the Jericho area.

The decision was announced shortly after the departure of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat from the Netherlands.

Mr. Arafat met Dutch ministers and businessmen on a one-day visit to promote investment in the fledgling Palestinian territories.

"Most of the Dutch money will come from the development ministry, the spokesman said.

Earlier on Monday the European Commission said it had granted 5.7 million European currency units (\$6.5 million) in emergency humanitarian aid to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and elsewhere.

Mr. Arafat visited the commission last month and received broad backing from European Union foreign ministers for a five-year plan worth 500 million ECUs (\$570 million).

At the international donors' meeting in Washington last October the PLO was pledged over \$2 billion to help Palestinians build the infrastructure and economy of the occupied territories over the next five years.

Clinton praises 3 who subdued train gunman

NEW YORK (R) — President Bill Clinton personally thanked three men who intervened to stop a shooting spree on a Long Island commuter train that killed six passengers and wounded 17, and later publicly praised their heroism.

Clinton's accolades for Kevin Blum, 42, Mark McEntee, 34, and Michael O'Connor, 32, came at a political fund-raising dinner at which he urged Americans to become "far more intolerant" of conditions that have caused an upsurge of violent crime in America.

"They had a lot to lose (but) that acted. They just took responsibility, and they saved lives," he said in praising the men who tackled and subdued the accused gunman, New York resident Colin Ferguson, last week. Before the \$1,000-a-plate dinner for New York's Democratic Senator Daniel Moynihan, Mr. Clinton met with the three and their families at his suite at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.

"I just wanted to see them, and talk to them, and ask them how they were feeling and figure out, why did these guys do this — take responsibility?" he said.

The three jumped Ferguson aboard the commuter train as he was reloading his semi-automatic pistol for the second time. With 160 additional rounds of ammunition in a canvas bag, authorities believe Ferguson would have kept firing if the three men had not acted. In his speech, Mr. Clinton urged other Americans to emulate them and take responsibility for eradicating the social evil that lead to crime and other domestic problems.

Trip to Bermuda turns into battle for survival
NEW YORK (AP) — Two men who survived a ferocious storm by clinging to a lifeboat for 12 hours said they were so busy trying to stay alive — and so confident the U.S. Coast Guard would find them — that they never felt afraid.

"It's very difficult to be frightened when you have to do something for survival," Fareed Surleah said in a ship-to-shore interview Monday.

"When you're in a situation and you have to focus, there is no time for fear. Whenever fear enters, you make mistakes and you fail." "We had no great concern," said the other man, Herbert Clarity. "We knew the Coast Guard was going to find us. They rescue many, many people and we had confidence. It was just a matter of waiting." A similar scenario off the Florida coast apparently ended in tragedy.

Two fishermen were rescued but their two friends, were still missing Monday, two days after their fishing boat sank in rough seas. Surleah, 47, and Clarity, 63, are both experienced sailors. They set out Wednesday from New York's City Island in their 30-foot (9-metre) sailboat, The Lightfoot, on a 740-mile (1,190-kilometre) trip to Bermuda.

Early Saturday morning, about 225 miles (360 kilometres) southeast of Long Island, they encountered 12-knot winds, 40-foot (12-metre) seas, and a driving rain. The Coast Guard picked up their emergency signal and a search plane found them, but the storm made an air rescue impossible. The sailboat capsized as the plane hovered overhead, and the two men got in their lifeboat. The plane was forced to return to its base as darkness fell, and for several hours the Coast Guard lost contact with them.

But another search plane, on its third and final sweep of the area, finally saw their strobe light, and a Coast Guard jet sped to the site.

Trials in Beverly Hills mansion slayings end
LOS ANGELES (AP) — Separate trials of two brothers accused of killing their parents in their Beverly Hills mansion are drawing to a close as jurors weigh defence arguments that the two acted in self-defence after being sexually abused.

Verdicts were being awaited after more than four months of evidence presented against Erik and Lyle Menendez, charged in the highly publicised 1989 shooting death of their parents, Jose and Kitty Menendez, in their \$4 million home. A total of 101 witnesses has testified and 405 exhibits have been shown in the two trials, and jurors Monday were deliberating in the trial of Lyle, 25, while another panel heard closing arguments in the case against his 23-year-old brother.

'Japan ready to help as long as Jordan is willing to help itself'

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Japan will continue its assistance to Jordan to help develop its economy but the Kingdom has to work very hard along the lines Japan did to help itself in the aftermath of World War II, a veteran Japanese economic expert says.

Yoichiro Nagatomi, who spent decades in Japanese policy-making in finance and foreign affairs before becoming adviser to an influential semi-government think-tank, said he admires Jordan's performance in addressing its economic problems and believes that it should continue and intensify its efforts.

"Japan is very interested in Jordan because (Tokyo) believes that Jordan's pragmatic and realistic role has contributed significantly to the (Middle East) peace process," said Mr. Nagatomi, who is visiting Jordan on what is billed as a familiarisation visit.

Once peace is achieved, he said, there will be numerous opportunities for joint ventures and business chances, and "Jordan will see more Japanese assistance coming in various forms if it works hard and continues its self-help efforts."

By the same token, Japan, which holds several hundred millions of dollars of Jordan's foreign debts, does not believe in debt write-off and Jordan should not pursue such an objective regardless of the circumstances, he said.

Mr. Nagatomi cited the example of Malaysia and In-

donesia. The two countries, he said, borrowed heavily from Japan in yen-denominated loans over the years but found themselves owing Tokyo three times the amount they borrowed because the Japanese currency was revalued several times.

Both countries exerted intense efforts on their own without seeking debt relief and managed to register impressive results in their economies, an objective that would not have been achieved if they had received debt relief, he said.

On the other side of the equation, he said, were Egypt and Poland which no longer qualify for Japanese assistance since they secured massive write-off of their foreign debts.

The Japanese philosophy of helping people who help themselves derives from Japan's own experience, said Mr. Nagatomi, who served as a senior diplomat and then as secretary-general of the Ministry of Finance before becoming adviser to the Institute for Fiscal and Monetary Policies of the ministry.

"The Japanese people worked very hard after World War II, when it was a recipient of external assistance and loans, to repay its debts and gradually surpass the United States and become the world's largest donor today," he pointed out.

"The Japanese people know the importance of peace," said Mr. Nagatomi, adding that his recollections of Japan's economic experience came from those years

when he served as finance attaché at his country's embassy in Washington and negotiated loans.

In the case of Jordan, the expert conceded that the Kingdom could not hope to address its problems if it focused solely on its scarce natural resources.

Jordanians have to be aggressive in pursuing business opportunities unrelated to national resources and develop own industries, and this is where Japan and its people could help the Kingdom in the immediate phase, he said.

Jordan survived the economic crisis that started in 1988 and exacerbated by the 1990-91 Gulf crisis, he said, noting that the Kingdom posted impressive growth in its gross domestic product in 1991 and 1992 and expects a similar growth this year.

Jordan has to see itself in a regional context encompassing Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt as well as Iran, and develop its economic approach as a key centre for trade and commerce, he said.

Mr. Nagatomi, who met with Finance Minister Sami Gammo and Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) Deputy Governor Michel Marto on Monday, said he would convey his views on Jordan to Japanese policymakers at the concerned institutions, including the Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund and the Overseas Development Agency.

My views on Jordan are very favourable," Mr. Nagatomi said, adding that he was



Yoichiro Nagatomi

also influenced by reports compiled by the Japanese embassy in Amman that reflect "love and affection" for the Kingdom.

Mr. Nagatomi noted that Japan chairs the working group on environment stemming from the multilateral phase of the peace process and is vice-chairman of the working groups on water and regional economic cooperation.

He said Japan stood ready to contribute to the success of the peace process and help the parties individually as well as in a regional context without "any political ambitions."

Such a Japanese stand, he said, means that Tokyo will deal with the countries collectively as well as individually on the basis of the agreements that the countries reach among themselves.

"The Japanese people and government are sincerely hopeful that the peace process will result in economic development of the Middle East," he said. "We highly evaluate your country's contribution to the peace process."

Jericho, which had been scheduled to begin on Monday.

Businessmen are rushing to position themselves but few feel secure enough to begin transferring funds until laws for business become clearer.

Many believe private projects in tourism or industry will not begin before the Palestinian authority resembles a normal administration, with a free market economy encouraging private capital.

"Private Palestinian capital is still waiting to see the nature of the government," said Munib Al Maasi, a scion of one of the most prominent Palestinian families.

Investors expect no strong investment before early 1995. Only small trading concerns with little investment are moving in, looking for quick gains.

"Without clear answers on who will be in charge of economic decision making, laws governing business, and the political relationship (with Jordan)...its natural that the establishment of projects will remain suspended," Mr. Shahin said.

The first deadline set in the self-rule accord was missed when Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat failed to agree on Sunday on Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and

Jericho, which had been scheduled to begin on Monday.

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S. Lebanon exiles return home today

MARJ AL ZOUHOUR, Lebanon (Agencies) — A group of around 200 Palestinian exiles are to return to the Israeli-occupied territories on Wednesday, they said here Tuesday.

The exiles told journalists at their tent in southern Lebanon that they had received authorisation to return in a letter from the Israeli army.

The letter, delivered by a driver, called on the exiles to show up early Wednesday at the Zemmara crossing into Israel's "security zone" on the border.

In occupied Jerusalem, defence ministry spokesman Oded Ben Ami confirmed the letter and said the exiles would be brought back on Wednesday.

"They will be detained for

processing and most of them will remain in jail," Mr. Ben Ami told AFP.

Military sources said Monday the Palestinians would be detained for 96 hours in military camps on the Israeli-occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip as soon as they arrived at the Israeli border.

Those suspected of having committed "crimes against security" would stay in detention, the sources added, without giving details.

The leader of the 215 exiles, Abdul Aziz Al Rantisi, announced to the jubilant men that the letter asks them to be at Zemmara at 8 a.m. (0600 GMT) Wednesday from where they would be driven in buses back to Israel. Zemmara is 20 kilometres south of the camp.

Landslide kills at least 30 in Cairo slum area

CAIRO (Agencies) — At least 30 people died in their beds early Tuesday as cliffs over a southeastern suburb of Cairo collapsed in a landslide and sent boulders crashing down onto a shantytown, police said.

They said 21 people were dug out alive, including an eight-year-old boy. But around 15 others were still missing, many of them feared dead.

Residents said far more people were still buried, trapped in their beds by the landslide from the 100-metre-high Mokattam hill that struck before dawn. But they gave no figures.

Hundreds of tonnes of boulders rained down from the Mokattam stone quarry onto buildings in the heavily-populated Dweqa shantytown, home mostly to the "zebbalin" who collect and recycle Cairo's

garbage.

Colonel Waguhi Shafik, in charge of the rescue work, said more than 10 apartment buildings were destroyed along with several one-storey homes. Many other homes were damaged or cracked.

Brigadier Osama Mohamad Mansour, head of area police, said 21 people were rescued. At least seven others were injured in houses at the edge of the collapse.

Subhi Sader, 21, whose house was left with a huge hole, said he was awakened by what sounded like an explosion.

"We thought it was an earthquake," Mr. Sader said. "I woke up my brothers and my sisters. When all the dust went away, we looked and saw that the mountain had fallen."

Ex-British minister claims Jordan bust sanctions

LONDON (Agencies) — A former British minister testifying Tuesday at an inquiry into arms sales to Iraq accused Jordan of being "notorious" for breaking sanctions against Baghdad and questioned Britain's trust in Amman.

"I never understood the level of trust which was reposed in Jordan, which seemed to me to over-reach an objective assessment of what was happening," said former Minister of State for Defence Alan Clark.

"I would assume that wider diplomatic considerations came into it," he told a judicial inquiry into Britain's sales of arms manufacturing equipment to the government of President Saddam Hussein before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

Jordan "was notorious for their role in breaking sanctions" against Iraq, Mr. Clark asserted. "I don't think much was done about it because Jordan was classified as a friendly

country, which Iraq certainly wasn't."

Mr. Clark said the government had been concerned that Jordan was being used as a staging post for weapons to Iraq before and even during the 1991 Gulf war.

"I was so angry about this that I did my best, unsuccessfully as it turned out, to prevent the King of Jordan being invited to take the sovereign's parade at Sandhurst in 1991, because I thought it wrong and insulting," he said.

King Hussein is a graduate of Britain's elite Royal Military Academy, at Sandhurst in southern England, and it is considered a high honour to be invited to review a parade there.

Mr. Clark, who gave evidence in court that led to the collapse last year of the trial of three British businessmen accused of illegal exports to Iraq, was speaking on the second of three days of testimony to the inquiry (see page 2).

Trials in Beverly Hills mansion slayings end

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Separate trials of two brothers accused of killing their parents in their Beverly Hills mansion are drawing to a close as jurors weigh defence arguments that the two acted in self-defence after being sexually abused.

Verdicts were being awaited after more than four months of evidence presented against Erik and Lyle Menendez, charged in the highly publicised 1989 shooting death of their parents, Jose and Kitty Menendez, in their \$4 million home. A total of 101 witnesses has testified and 405 exhibits have been shown in the two trials, and jurors Monday were deliberating in the trial of Lyle, 25, while another panel heard closing arguments in the case against his 23-year-old brother.